

BLACK PRESS PIONEERS IN KANSAS:  
CONNECTING AND EXTENDING COMMUNITIES  
IN THREE GEOGRAPHIC SECTIONS, 1878-1900

By

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Black newspapers in Kansas were at the forefront of a westward-expanding press in the late-nineteenth century. More than fifty newspapers were produced over a 20-year period, primarily in a triangular area that extended from Atchison County in the northeast, near the Missouri and Nebraska borders, to Sedgwick County in the southwest and to Labette and Cherokee counties in the southeast. A newspaper network evolved that helped forge ties among communities of African Americans in the Sunflower State.

To better understand the "connecting" role of the Kansas press, the study focused on six newspapers that published in the geographic sections: the *Leavenworth Advocate*, *Leavenworth Herald*, *Topeka State Ledger*, the

*Kansas City American Citizen*, the *Parsons Weekly Blade*, and the *National Reflector* of Wichita.

An historical analysis of the newspapers revealed a press network that served as a pipeline for information, a platform to denounce injustices, and a promoter for racial uplift through education and entrepreneurship. The Kansas newspapers multiplied opportunities for involvement of African Americans in the public sphere and served as a forum for expression, as well as an outlet for employment and job training.

Combined efforts of editors, reporters, correspondents, and agents contributed to building interconnections among communities of African Americans. Initially, the circulation of the newspapers centered on nearby towns and cities. To increase revenues and influence, the outreach of the press eventually extended beyond the state's borders. The Kansas press network in all probability contributed to the concept of a national black press that developed in the early twentieth century.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In November 1898, the Wichita (Kan.) Tribune reprinted the following complimentary words excerpted from columns of the black-run weekly Colorado Springs (Colo.) *Sun*:

The progress of the Afro-Americans of Kansas can be realized by the number of bright, newsy papers that come to our desk from every quarter of that glorious state. . . . A race that has such able and fearless exponents of their best thought and interest cannot long remain an "unknown quantity" in the affairs of men.<sup>1</sup>

The Tribune, a four-page sheet founded five months earlier, noted: "Kansas has one Negro daily newspaper, eight weeklies, and twenty-seven practical Negro printers."<sup>2</sup> These "bright, newsy papers" were among more than fifty black newspapers published in the Sunflower State during the last decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

Extant copies preserved on microfilm testify to the vitality of the Kansas black press and its specialized readership.<sup>4</sup> These black-run newspapers, the earliest being the Fort Scott Colored Citizen founded in 1878, were published primarily in white-majority towns and cities where African Americans lived and worked.<sup>5</sup> While some papers survived for only a few weeks or months, other publishers managed to issue their papers for more than a decade.

Armstead Scott Pride, a historian of the black press, noted that newspapers were found wherever a sizable concentration of African Americans lived.<sup>6</sup> Such was the case for black communities in Kansas-in the late-nineteenth century. Along with churches, schools, literary societies, and fraternal orders, black-run papers were often among the first institutions established in black communities. Newspapers became a central institution in the social organization and function of these communities.<sup>7</sup> The papers helped establish connections among area residents and provided individuals with useful information about their day-to-day concerns.<sup>8</sup> The black press also noted accomplishments of community residents and social happenings, and they covered pertinent issues that were overlooked, discounted, or denigrated by local mainstream newspapers.<sup>9</sup>

Like many of their counterparts throughout the United States, these newspapers participated in the ongoing crucial debate of the period: determining the status of blacks in American society. Through news coverage and editorials that conveyed information, reported incidents of discrimination, and protested injustices, these newspapers helped to develop a sense of individual and community identity in a state where black residents made up about 4 percent of the population in 1880. Even though a relatively small percentage of blacks lived statewide, newspapers operated by blacks established a notable presence in rural

and urban Kansas communities, mostly located in the eastern half of the state.<sup>10</sup>

#### Statement of Purpose

The westward movement of blacks from the South contributed to the geographic and numeric expansion of the black press, particularly in Kansas, a state that became synonymous with freedom, opportunity, and land ownership. Between 1860 and 1880, the recorded population of African Americans living in Kansas increased from 625 to 43,100.<sup>11</sup> While some blacks fled to Kansas as escaped slaves and freedmen well before the Emancipation Proclamation, a mass movement of blacks, many from Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, flooded the state in 1879. This influx of migrants, who were known as the Exodusters, most certainly facilitated the rise of the black press in Kansas in the decades that followed.<sup>12</sup>

As newcomers sought to establish themselves on the Kansas frontier and black communities began to take shape, black-owned newspapers readily appeared, primarily in northeast, southeast, and southwest regions of the state. Newspapers sprang up in small towns and cities located in areas most densely populated by blacks. Many of these newspapers were established as business enterprises, typically set up by members of the socio-economic elite and rising middle classes of the town. The papers voiced social and political concerns of their constituencies, provided jobs for area residents, and promoted economic development

in their communities. None of the newspapers operated autonomously; papers published in one region ran news from other areas and distributed editions throughout the state, networking many of the black communities within Kansas.

As the press disseminated news and information to various communities, newspaper readers became part of a larger community that extended beyond narrow geographic boundaries. These readers shared a sense of belonging with those whom they did not know personally and comprised what has been termed "an imagined community."<sup>13</sup> For example, several weeks after F. L. Jeltz of Topeka founded the *Kansas State Ledger* in 1892, copies of the paper were distributed regularly in Topeka, as well as Lawrence, Emporia, and Wichita. Although subscribers lived in different cities, they gleaned news and information from the same source. Thus, *Kansas State Ledger* readers could view themselves as part of a much larger community, one that embraced the newspaper's circulation, which included readers living miles apart. Other papers evidenced similar scenarios.

This dissertation examines ways in which black newspapers linked readers living in three geographic sections of Kansas. Through the combined efforts of editors, reporters, correspondents, and agents, the black press established and maintained interconnections among the state's black communities. The study reveals ways a westward-expanding press contributed to a collective

identity that not only embraced those African Americans living in towns and cities of Kansas, but extended to communities beyond the state's boundaries.

These newspapers characterized a type of personal journalism, similarly found in most mainstream and frontier newspapers during the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Typically, black newspapers reflected the personalities, concerns, and ideologies of the editors, even though they addressed similar issues in their respective copy. Thus, an essential aspect in analyzing prominent social, political, and economic issues found in the newspapers is an understanding of the motivations of those who published the papers. Exploring information about the editors' backgrounds, as well as determining cultural factors of the period that influenced them, provides insight into their choices for news coverage and their editorial stances.

#### Literature Review

This section examines representative literature that is most pertinent to the study and identifies contributions the dissertation will make to historical accounts of the black press of the late-nineteenth century. The scholarly literature most directly related to the black press in Kansas during this time period is limited primarily to references found within surveys of black press history, biographies and biographical sketches that depict black journalists and newspapers of the era, and several

historical studies that specifically focus on newspapers published in Kansas.

The development of black newspapers can be viewed in several phases. Some media historians have designated the years following the Civil War until the turn of the century as the second phase of black press development, a history that originated in 1827 with the founding of *Freedom's Journal* by John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish in New York City.<sup>15</sup> In the first phase, a majority of newspapers were published in the North, while the second phase was characterized by increased literacy among blacks and a growing number of newspapers in the South.<sup>16</sup>

A few media scholars have delineated the last two decades of the 1800s as part of the third stage of press development, a time marked by reaction and adjustment to the violence perpetrated against African Americans.<sup>17</sup> During this period, the antebellum and Reconstruction eras, newspapers shifted from campaigning for emancipation to educating the black populace. Historians, however, generally agree that the press of the late-nineteenth century became one of the social institutions that enabled African Americans to cope with the political, social, and economic barriers they faced during the post-Reconstruction years.<sup>18</sup>

Much of the scholarship about black newspapers of this period is included in general works that survey black press history. These works provide a chronology of the press

that, in the years after Reconstruction, grew dramatically in different regions of the United States.<sup>19</sup> Such studies also identify and describe the roles black newspapers played in developing black communities of this period. Overlooked or ignored by the established press, black newspapers provided readers with information, advocated for political and social change, engendered individual and corporate identities, and cultivated community cohesiveness during a time of growing prejudice and discrimination directed against African Americans.<sup>20</sup> This expanding press also created a sense of solidarity among the African-American intelligentsia and promoted small, black-run businesses through advertisements in the newspapers.

Frederick G. Detweiler conducted one of the earliest overviews of the black press, *The Negro Press in the United States*.<sup>21</sup> Based on a survey of contemporary black newspapers in the early 1920s, Detweiler contended that the black press arose out of conflict over slavery and provided avenues for protest against inequities, carrying "through its entire history this motive, the fight for liberation."<sup>22</sup> Black-run papers provided a reinterpretation of the racial conflicts reported in white newspapers.

Detweiler divided black press history into two phases. The anti-slavery movement facilitated the first phase of black press development, while the second phase grew out of the efforts of blacks to establish themselves as free citizens.<sup>23</sup> Although Detweiler mentioned about twenty

newspapers that originated in the 1880s and 1890s, whose editors he referred to as "the generation just passing,"<sup>24</sup> he concentrated on journalists publishing newspapers at the time he wrote his book.<sup>25</sup> As a result, Detweiler's work cannot be considered a definitive history of early black newspapers. This current study of Kansas newspapers published at the turn of the century broadens Detweiler's second phase to include newspapers that had been overlooked, ignored, or forgotten by the 1920s.

A major contributor to historical groundbreaking in the study of late-nineteenth-century black newspapers was Armistead Scott Pride, who compiled a registry that identified many of the black newspapers established during this period and documented a nationwide surge in the number of newspapers.<sup>26</sup> In addition, Pride provided descriptive information that pinpointed newspapers published in different states during the period, even if no known copies had been found. He recorded established newspapers, compiled an index of microfilmed extant newspapers, and identified general characteristics and functions of the newspapers published by blacks. Regarding Kansas newspapers, Pride wrote: "Kansas, terminus in the underground railroad and destination of discontented ex-slaves, has produced an unusually large number of Negro newspapers."<sup>27</sup>

Pride's registry, while helpful in providing basic descriptions of black newspapers and locations of extant

copies, included little in-depth analysis of the papers of the late-nineteenth century. By contrast, this historical study examines the Kansas newspapers in light of the historical context in which they were published and analyzes ways the newspapers advanced developing black communities on the Kansas plains.

Pride died before he could finish his long-term project, a comprehensive history of the black press in the United States. Clint Wilson, along with Pride as the posthumous co-author, completed *A History of the Black Press*, which underscored the evolutionary trends of black newspapers.<sup>28</sup> The authors emphasized social and political contexts that surrounded black newspaper development from 1827 to the present. The book identified historical "firsts" essential in any account of an expanding press, such as the *San Francisco Mirror of the Times*, the first black newspaper published west of Kansas.<sup>29</sup> While the survey gave some attention to publications in Kansas, the book's broad scope precludes depth of study and analysis of specific newspapers.

Prior to the book written by Pride and Wilson, Roland Wolseley's *The Black Press, U.S.A.* had examined the relationship of societal and economic factors that influenced the development of early black newspapers.<sup>30</sup> Among the issues treated was the vigorous protest of black journalists against new policies of segregation in the late-nineteenth century. Wolseley's early history section,

though, addressed only a few black newspapers and editors of the 1880s and 1890s, including the *Washington Bee* and William Calvin Chase and the *Elevator*, published by Philip A. Bell in San Francisco.<sup>31</sup> While Wolseley noted the growth of the press after Reconstruction, he devoted more space to early twentieth-century publications, particularly those of Robert Abbott and the *Chicago Defender*.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, his landmark work overlooked almost entirely the contributions of black Kansas journalists and their newspapers.

Several other historians have focused on economic and functional aspects of black newspapers published during this period.<sup>33</sup> Emma Lou Thornbrough scrutinized newspapers published from 1880 through 1914 and pinpointed a primary factor to explain the short life spans and financial difficulties common to newspapers that were published during those years. The papers operated as instruments of racial uplift and protest rather than businesses.<sup>34</sup> Most newspapers lacked sizable advertising accounts and relied on subscribers, many of whom had below-average incomes. They also relied on subsidies from other sources, including political parties, churches, and an editor's income from other employment.<sup>35</sup>

While Thornbrough focused on economic factors, Bernell Tripp suggested that black editors were influential in shaping and molding public opinion through their newspapers. Editors provided particular viewpoints about events, topics, and issues in their newspapers, which acted

as a unifying mechanism that drew readers together.<sup>36</sup> Lauren Kessler, in *The Dissident Press*, pointed to three additional roles played consistently by black newspapers since the founding of *Freedom's Journal*. Over the years, black newspapers acknowledged accomplishments by blacks, educated their readers, and protested inequalities and injustices, though the newspapers of the post-Civil War nineteenth century were less militant than those preceding or immediately following them.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to Kessler, several others have focused on African-American journalistic protest against racism, beginning with slavery in the antebellum years and continuing through post-World War II, including the period of Booker T. Washington's leadership.<sup>38</sup> Charlotte O'Kelly made a significant contribution to the historiography of the black press during this span of years by examining political and social conditions, ideologies, and events that influenced the content of black newspapers and responses from the black journalists. These studies provide general characteristics of black newspapers and identify similarities over time of black press functions, but the works do not give an extensive analysis of specific newspapers, particularly those published in the late-nineteenth century.

While some historians examined pragmatic aspects of the newspapers, other scholars narrowed their focus to newspapers from specific geographic locations, regions, or

states.<sup>39</sup> Because these works often were collected essays written by different scholars, the quality varied, particularly in the authors' uses of primary and secondary sources. For example, in *The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865-1985*, the writer of the chapter on the Indiana black press relied heavily on newspaper quotations cited in secondary sources.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, Henry Lewis Suggs's own chapter on the South Dakota press cited directly from the newspapers as primary sources.<sup>41</sup>

Overall, the general studies of the black press largely relied both on secondary and primary sources. The more in-depth studies generally limited their assessment to newspapers published only in major urban centers rather than focusing on local newspapers of smaller cities and towns.

In addition to completing surveys, historians have studied the late-nineteenth-century black press by producing biographies and portraits of its journalists and newspapers. These historical studies revealed that black editors, in particular, were role models and community leaders who were influential in shaping and molding public opinion through their newspapers. One Kansas editor, S. W. Jones of the *National Reflector*, served as constable of Wichita, the city's first elected black official. As community leaders, editors provided a sophisticated point of view about events, topics, or issues. Their newspapers often acted as community cheerleaders, so to speak.<sup>42</sup>

Biographies build on preliminary studies of black press history by identifying and assessing prominent contributors to the development of black newspapers. They give information about the personal backgrounds of editors and newspapers, thus humanizing black press history. The biographical works link journalists and newspapers to historical events and to campaigns of the era, such as the antilynching efforts of Ida B. Wells-Barnett and the political activism of T. Thomas Fortune through the *New York Age* and the Afro-American League.<sup>43</sup>

The earliest historical account of late-nineteenth-century black journalists was published in 1891. I. Garland Penn, journalist and educator, wrote *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors*, the first comprehensive history of the press.<sup>44</sup> Many of the journalists and newspapers sketched in the book were Penn's contemporaries. Though the volume contained some inaccurate information gathered from its contributors, such as the misidentification of the *Colored American* of Georgia as the first black newspaper in the South, the book overviewed the black press from its inception in 1827.<sup>45</sup> Penn's book provided a foundation for black press history by recording information about selected early newspapers and their editors. Penn included biographical sketches of several Kansas editors, among them John Lewis Waller, W. B. Townsend, and C. H. Taylor, and he highlighted their newspapers in the volume.<sup>46</sup>

While Penn supplied the first collection of sketches of black journalists and newspapers of the late-nineteenth century, biographical information on black newspapers and journalists also can be found in general works on the black press, which rely heavily on the use of secondary sources.<sup>47</sup> Although Wolseley made no reference to Kansas editors and newspapers, he and other historians have written vignettes about editors and newspapers, as well as book-length biographies of the most prominent editors, a cartoonist, correspondents, and newspapers of the period.<sup>48</sup>

Beginning in the early 1970s, historians undertook a more thorough examination of notable black journalists who were considered to be prominent black leaders at the turn of the century. Emma Lou Thornbrough and Stephen R. Fox were among the first historians to write extensive biographies about late-nineteenth-century journalists.<sup>49</sup> Central to these works was the ideological debate that typified the partisan period of the black press, a time when newspapers "largely divided into two--decidedly unequal--ideological camps," the accommodationists and the radicals.<sup>50</sup> T. Thomas Fortune and the *New York Age* eventually aligned with Booker T. Washington and other conservative accommodationists who endorsed a conciliatory approach to race relations and subscribed to an economic philosophy in advancing the status of blacks. Meanwhile, anti-Bookerite William Monroe Trotter and the *Boston Guardian* assumed leadership for the radicals, who denounced

civil and social inequities encountered by blacks and supported political activism to achieve equality, endorsing the stance of W. E. B. Du Bois.<sup>51</sup>

These biographies foreshadowed others, including Willard B. Gatewood's biographical works of two Indianapolis Freeman editors. Gatewood wrote a scholarly journal article on founder E. E. Cooper, as well as the introduction to George L. Knox's autobiography.<sup>52</sup> Mildred I. Thompson wrote the first comprehensive biography of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, one of the most well-known black women journalists of the era.<sup>53</sup> Although she did not overlook the journalistic role of the Memphis Free Speech editor, Thompson emphasized Wells-Barnett's militant activism, evidenced by her agitation against lynching and her campaigns for social and civil rights through women's clubs, the women's suffrage movement, and settlement houses in Chicago.<sup>54</sup>

Within these biographies of late-nineteenth-century black journalists, historians have identified specific journalists and publications that were integral to the influence of black newspapers during this period.<sup>55</sup> These works give a multi-dimensional picture of history and help convey a fuller understanding of the black press by revealing some of the editors' motivations. Biographies about those who edited and wrote for black newspapers, along with an understanding of the circumstances they confronted, provide a human connection to the newspapers,

as well as place the newspapers and journalists within a historical context.

Several limitations counter the strengths of biographical works written about journalists of this era. Like some of the early biographies written about mainstream journalists, historians have tended to emphasize the "Great Man" Theory, focusing on only a few, better-known editors. Biographers have provided a rather narrow perspective of black press history by determining the key newspapers and journalists, as well as historical events, that were significant and meaningful. Historians focused chiefly on T. Thomas Fortune of the *New York Age*; Harry C. Smith, long-time editor of the *Cleveland Gazette*; Cooper, founder of the *Indianapolis Freeman*; John Mitchell Jr. of the *Richmond Planet*; and Trotter and the *Guardian* of Boston. Past historians also have tended to overuse Ida B. Wells-Barnett, co-owner of the *Memphis Free Speech* and columnist "Iola" for the *Age*, as the representative black woman journalist of the late-nineteenth century.<sup>56</sup> Less is known about other contemporary journalists, including those who lived in smaller cities and towns, as well as those who played a role in the westward expansion of the black press.

Even though historians have tended to concentrate on those journalists who had national prominence, some mention has been made of editors and newspapers in Kansas communities during the late-nineteenth century. Such scholarship has furnished a more thorough examination of a

few of the newspapers published in Kansas and has identified several key issues faced by African Americans in Kansas. In addition to identifying particular newspapers and editors, the literature about the Kansas press added a needed dimension in understanding the development of black communities in Kansas, both urban and rural. As mentioned earlier, biographical sketches of several Kansas editors and their newspapers were highlighted in Penn's 1891 book, giving some weight to peer recognition of their contributions to media history.<sup>57</sup>

Although Penn's sketches provided some information about Kansas's journalists, the book has its limitations. A few other studies, though, give a more extensive view of two black journalists from Kansas noted by Penn. Randall B. Woods wrote an extended biography of John Lewis Waller, an editor of several newspapers who served as U.S. consul to Madagascar from 1891 to 1894.<sup>58</sup> Woods sought to explain a pervasive dilemma faced by Waller, who was caught in a paradox. While trying to work within the political and economic system of the dominant culture, Waller repeatedly encountered inequities and could not neglect to protest those injustices.<sup>59</sup>

Woods also wrote an article on journalist and politician Charles H. J. Taylor, a college-educated lawyer.<sup>60</sup> Taylor, a Democrat who edited a paper in Kansas City, received national political appointments as minister to Liberia and register of deeds in Washington, D.C.

According to Woods, Taylor contributed to the political milieu in Kansas by advocating that blacks choose political independence over loyalty to the Republican Party. While Woods' scholarship has provided historical context about the political activities of African Americans living in Kansas during this period, his work has illuminated less about the dynamics of the state's black press.

Despite the number of black newspapers from Kansas that have been preserved from the late-nineteenth century, historical studies of these newspapers are few. One of the earliest and most thorough studies about black newspapers produced in a single state was Rashey B. Moten's "The Negro Press of Kansas."<sup>61</sup> In this survey of black newspapers in Kansas, Moten identified factors that affected the development of the newspapers, including politics, the Exoduster migration, and the lack of coverage of black concerns by white newspapers. He found that the press created political alliances and expanded spheres of influence for black leaders. Moten's developmental approach, though, provided little about the historical context in which the newspapers operated.

Some thirty years after Moten's master's thesis was written, Martin Dann took a different approach in examining the content of black newspapers in Kansas.<sup>62</sup> In a collection of articles from selected black newspapers, including numerous excerpts from several Kansas papers, Dann chronicled the struggle of African Americans for a national

identity in a society where rights and identity were denied by the majority culture.<sup>63</sup> His remarks at the beginning of each chapter highlighted some of the underlying issues that the Kansas press covertly and overtly addressed, but he provided minimal historical context for these excerpts.

In another thesis written about the Kansas black press, "Kansas as the Promised Land: The View of the Black Press, 1890-1900," Marie Deacon examined papers published during the last decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>64</sup> These newspapers reflected the political, social, and legal status of black Kansans, playing a pivotal role in their lives. Deacon argued that the papers became political vehicles through which African Americans sought recognition and civil rights, even though they made minimal progress. Editors confronted injustices in their columns. Deacon focused primarily on journals in the northeast corner of the state, citing only occasional references to papers and editors in the southeast and southwest.<sup>65</sup>

Another survey of the Kansas black press was written by Dorothy V. Smith in Henry Suggs's *The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865-1985*.<sup>66</sup> Smith explored the influence of Reconstruction, the ideology of the times, and the economic factors of newspapers in Kansas. She mentioned newspapers published in the late 1880s and 1890s by name only and primarily reiterated information about the earliest years of the press, already established in Moten's work.<sup>67</sup>

Most of the historical scholarship on the Kansas black press does not extensively examine individual newspapers or editors. Two studies, however, have focused on the *Parsons Weekly Blade*, issued in the southeastern corner of the state. Teresa C. Klassen and Owen V. Johnson found that the activism promoted by the *Weekly Blade*, as well as other local black newspapers in the late-nineteenth century, may have laid the foundation for the black activist press that developed after World War I.<sup>68</sup> Arnold Cooper examined the community-building role of the *Parsons* newspaper. Cooper found that by emphasizing racial solidarity, group economy, education, and moral development, the *Weekly Blade* helped to promote a self-determined black citizenry.<sup>69</sup>

The scholarship about black journalists and newspapers of Kansas helps establish the vitality of the black press during the post-Reconstruction years and provides a record of the newspapers in the area. Nonetheless, scholars have been chroniclers more than interpreters. They have highlighted newspapers in the northeastern part of the state, where the greatest number of blacks lived, while giving only limited attention to the southeastern and southwestern regions, where other concentrations were formed.

An analysis of the similarities and differences among the editors and newspapers of the state's regions awaits the scholar's pen. Works have tended to be descriptive and piecemeal, relying predominantly on the newspapers

themselves as primary sources for historical evidence about the editors and their newspapers. Gathering evidence from other primary documents helps bridge gaps and fill in omissions from these historical accounts.

This present study adds to the literature of black press history by building on work of past historians, while intending to be more interpretive than previous descriptive studies. Identifying the associations among the editors, agents, and correspondents of the newspapers, and, consequently, the connections established with black communities throughout Kansas, will give a greater understanding of the motivations behind the evolution of the black press. An aspect of that evolution was the newspapers' role in extending communities beyond a local level, which cultivated a corporate identity and helped to empower African Americans as they faced challenges on the frontier during the post-Reconstruction years.

#### Significance of Historical Research

Black newspapers in Kansas during the late-nineteenth century are a significant aspect of black press history on several counts. The late 1880s and 1890s, in particular, marked the beginning of a transitional stage in the development of black newspapers. The black press had entered a major growth period, extending from Reconstruction into the early twentieth century. A contributing factor to that expansion was the westward migration of blacks to Kansas. While much black press

history of this period has concentrated on newspapers published in larger urban areas or focused on descriptive accounts of content in those papers, viable newspapers also were published on the Kansas frontier. Stories of black communities in smaller towns, such as those in Kansas, have remained untold or at best, sketchy.

A second aspect of transition was a division that emerged between the approaches editors believed would raise the economic and social status of blacks. This conflict centered on accommodating whites versus protesting inequities. Many of the journalists of this era tended to align themselves in factions that supported either Booker T. Washington or W.E.B. Du Bois. This distinction, however, was rarely clear-cut on all issues. While many of the Kansas papers supported Washington's emphasis on economic development, they also protested the treatment of blacks as second-class citizens and called for just and equal treatment under the law.

In addition to geographic and ideological aspects of the transition, the black press was making an economic shift during the late-nineteenth century. Initially, the editors and publishers, along with ministers, were considered influential leaders in their communities and ran their papers while working at jobs in other fields. By the late 1880s, this trend had begun to change, as evidenced by the Kansas press. Newspapers frequently listed on the masthead both an editor and a business manager, with either

one or both making their livelihood as entrepreneurs of printing businesses. Despite this change, newspaper survival remained tenuous, due primarily to the lower economic base of black communities, which affected circulation size and advertising revenues.

Studying these papers adds a perspective regarding the role of late-nineteenth-century newspapers that is lacking in the overall history of the black press. Collectively, the Kansas newspapers served as a communication medium that helped shape opinions regarding issues that concerned blacks in Kansas, such as separate schools, political influence, and lynching. The newspapers, even when short-lived, contributed to the social fabric of those communities by linking blacks who lived in different towns and cities throughout the state. The Kansas newspapers illustrate how local black papers extended community beyond a limited geographic area and garnered support that empowered its readers as they faced injustices during the late-nineteenth century. This period in black press history preceded pre-World War I newspapers that sought to reach broader audiences through national distribution.

#### Methodology

The research objective of this dissertation is to examine how black newspapers in Kansas operated as a network that connected black communities throughout the state and to explain the role of the black press in

establishing and extending a sense of identity among a Kansas citizenry who encountered social, political, legal, and economic barriers. Since the black population of Kansas was concentrated primarily in three geographic regions, data were gathered from the most prominent newspapers published in these regions. Six newspapers were chosen on the basis of longevity, reputation of their editors, and recognition of their influence by contemporary black newspapers. From the northeast, four papers were chosen--the *Leavenworth Advocate*, *Leavenworth Herald*, *Topeka State Ledger*, and the *Kansas City American Citizen*; from the southeast, the *Parsons Weekly Blade*; and from the southwest, the *National Reflector* of Wichita.

Because of foresight by journalists and the Kansas State Historical Society, an extensive collection of extant black newspapers is available as primary sources from which much of the data were gathered. In addition, evidence was gleaned from other extant newspapers published inside and outside of Kansas, both mainstream and black; other contemporary publications; census records and marriage affidavits; Spanish-American War records; photographs; and personal papers and letters of pertinent contemporaries.

Secondary sources used included black press history studies, biographies, and historical studies. Secondary and primary sources helped to establish the background and the historical context in which the papers were published, as

well as to interpret and evaluate the evidence from primary sources.

Two types of evaluation were used to authenticate sources and to establish credibility and understanding of their content. External criticism addressed authorship and dates of the sources through analysis of content and comparison of various texts, if possible with the original record. In some cases, other extant newspapers were used to identify writers who used pseudonyms, as well as to verify the style of particular writers.

Internal criticism dealt with the credibility of the sources, as well as determining literal and real meaning of words, including colloquial expressions, terms, and concepts from the period. A knowledge of the historical context proved to be an essential tool in this task. Where necessary and available, other materials from the time period were used to cross-verify the evidence.

#### Structure of Dissertation

The story of the early Kansas black press is presented in a narrative form, and the chapters are structured into three main sections. Chapter 1 introduces the dissertation. Part One, "Forming a Foundation, is divided into two chapters. Chapter 2 sets the historical background and context in which the newspapers were produced. This chapter also focuses on six influential newspapers that were published in the three geographic areas of Kansas during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Even though

the newspapers were distributed to local readers, they cultivated connections among communities and groups of people in all three regions. Concentrating on six newspapers facilitated identification of unique aspects of the papers in each region and provided a way to compare and contrast editors and their newspapers in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 3 discusses different ways the newspapers helped cultivate a sense of community that was not limited to geographic boundaries and that embraced aspects of group identity and shared concerns. Contributors to collective identities included the editors, special and regular correspondents, agents, and the Western Press Association.

Part Two of the dissertation, "Grappling with Issues," includes Chapters 4, 5, and 6. This section discusses prominent issues addressed by newspapers in the three regions of the state. The themes of these chapters are politics and suffrage, racial discrimination, and racial uplift through education and business.

The final section is Part Three, "Approaching a Turning Point," which includes Chapter 7. The concluding chapter gives an overview of the newspapers and their interactions within the three regions. In particular, comparisons are made of the press from different regions, which reveal similarities and differences among the newspapers. The discussion focuses on the implications of the study, and, specifically, how the black press of Kansas

fits into the overall picture of black press history. The chapter also considers ways in which the late-nineteenth century press network pointed toward a change in the role of black newspapers in the early twentieth century.

#### Implications

This study shows the importance of Kansas' newspapers in black press history of the late-nineteenth century. Limited availability of extant newspapers and the scarcity of preserved records have affected understanding of the roles the black press played as it spread westward. This dissertation adds an understanding of cultural factors that influenced the press, as well as clarifies the role newspapers had in establishing and maintaining ties among black communities of Kansas. As blacks migrated west to other states and territories beyond Kansas, they started newspapers. The Kansas papers may well be representative of other publications that left little or no trace of their existence.

Consequently, this study gives a better understanding of how the black press in Kansas contributed to the overall history of the ethnic press that developed in the nineteenth century. A close look at these newspapers clarifies ways the black press had begun to shift from being primarily a medium of advocacy, edited predominantly by ministers and teachers, and for specialized audiences, to becoming publications that were similar to mainstream newspapers. Black newspapers of the twentieth century,

while still including news relevant for black readers, were generated by professional journalists at black-owned businesses and distributed nationally.

This dissertation also adds insight into Kansas's rich journalistic saga of the frontier press era. More newspapers were produced per capita than in any other state.<sup>70</sup> The black press is a little-recognized, yet significant, dimension of the history of newspapers in Kansas.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Reprinted from the Colorado Springs *Sun* in the Wichita Tribune, 12 November 1898.

<sup>2</sup>Wichita Tribune, 10 September 1898. D. L. Robinson edited the Wichita Tribune, having participated in several Wichita newspapers including the Wichita *Globe*, founded in 1887, and the *Kansas Headlight*, begun in 1894.

<sup>3</sup>In order to provide continuity throughout the dissertation, the terms "black" and "African American" are used as inclusive references for Afro-American, Negro, and colored.

<sup>4</sup>The Kansas State Historical Society library in Topeka has an extensive collection of extant black newspapers published in Kansas from the 1870s through the 1890s.

<sup>5</sup>The honor for the first black newspaper in Kansas is open to interpretation. The *Colored Radical* of Leavenworth had appeared for about three months in 1876, two years before the *Colored Citizen*. A political campaign sheet, the *Colored Radical* was edited by two black ministers but published by a white printer, and the paper expired after the fall election. According to black press historian Roland Wolseley, a newspaper qualified as a black publication if it was owned and managed by blacks, if it targeted a black readership, and if it advocated the cause

of blacks. See Rashey B. Moten, "The Negro Press of Kansas" (Unpublished master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1938), 54-58; Dorothy V. Smith, "The Black Press and the Search for Hope and Equality in Kansas, 1865-1985," ed. Henry L. Suggs, *The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865-1985* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 108; and Roland Wolseley, *The Black Press, U.S.A.*, 2nd ed. (Ames: Iowa State University, 1990), 3.

Note: Armistead Pride and Clint Wilson, in *A History of the Black Press*, listed *The Kansas Herald of Freedom* as an abolitionist paper, which began in Lawrence on 8 July 1855, as "the westernmost Black paper in existence until the beginning of Black papers in California a year later" (p. 62). This statement contradicts evidence from other sources. A Kansas State Historical Society compilation of newspapers and magazines listed the *Herald of Freedom* as founded by Dr. George W. Brown, and its first issue, dated 22 October 1854, Wakarusa, Kansas Territory, as being printed in Pennsylvania. The *Herald's* second issue was dated 6 January 1855 and published in Lawrence. According to David Dary, publisher Brown had been selected by the Emigrant Aid Company of New England to start a free paper in Kansas Territory for Wakarusa, an immigrant settlement of blacks, sponsored by the company. Once Brown arrived in Kansas, he discovered the town was named Lawrence, so he changed the place of publication. See Armistead S. Pride and Clint C. Wilson II, *A History of the Black Press* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1997), 62, 70; William E. Connelley, *History of Kansas Newspapers* (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1916), 180; and David Dary, *Red Blood & Black Ink* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 44.

<sup>6</sup>Armistead S. Pride, "The Negro Newspaper in the United States," *Gazette 2*, no. 3 (1956), 141-149.

<sup>7</sup>Henry G. La Brie III, *A Survey of Black Newspapers* (Kennebunkport, ME: Mercer House Press, 1979), 10; William L. Lang, "Helena, Montana's Black Community, 1900-1912," in *African Americans on the Western Frontier*, eds. Monroe Lee Billington and Roger D. Hardaway (Niwot, CO: The University of Colorado Press, 1998), 198-199; and Lauren Kessler, *The Dissident Press* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1984), 26.

<sup>8</sup>Gayle K. Berardi and Thomas W. Segady, "The Development of African American Newspapers in the American West, 1880-1914," in *African Americans on the Western Frontier*, eds. Monroe Lee Billington and Roger D. Hardaway, 217-230 (Niwot, CO: The University of Colorado Press, 1998).

<sup>9</sup>Kessler, 21-47.

<sup>10</sup>The growth of the black press in Kansas was not unlike that of other states and regions in the United States during this time. The number of black publications had increased nationally from twelve newspapers in 1866 to nearly 600 in 1890, though many of the papers were short-lived. See Armistead S. Pride, "Negro Newspapers: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," *Journalism Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (Spring 1951), 179-188.

<sup>11</sup>Census data for 1860, 1870 and 1880, "Historical United States Census Data Browser," accessed 22 October 2000, available at <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/census/>; Internet.

<sup>12</sup>Nudie E. Williams, "Black Newspapers and the Exodusters" (Unpublished diss., Oklahoma State University, 1977), 20; and Bernell E. Tripp, "Extending the Boundaries: 19th-Century Historical Influences on Black Press Development," (Unpublished paper presented at American Journalism Historians Association, October 1998).

<sup>13</sup>Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 62-63.

<sup>14</sup>Robert V. Karolevitz, *Newspapering in the Old West* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1962), 13-14.

<sup>15</sup>Frederick G. Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the United States* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1922), 37; La Brie, 10; Kessler, 34-39; and Jannette L. Dates and William Barlow, *Split Image* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1990), 344-360.

<sup>16</sup>Nearly all of an estimated fifty newspapers were published in the North prior to the Civil War. Between 1865

and 1900, the number of newspapers grew to more than 1,200, with the majority published in the South. See La Brie, 10.

<sup>17</sup>See Charles A. Simmons, *The African American Press: With Special Reference to Four Newspapers, 1827-1965* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1998), 5-24. Simmons distinguishes 1877-1915 as "the era of reaction and adjustment" (p. 16). He contends that these years were the most grueling and challenging time for the black press. Many editors, particularly those in the South, resorted to a less militant, or even muted stance, in their newspapers, although there were exceptions, such as Ida B. Wells and William Monroe Trotter.

<sup>18</sup>Martin E. Dann, ed., *The Black Press, 1827-1890: The Quest for National Identity* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971); Kessler, *Dissident Press*; Charlotte G. O'Kelly, "Black Newspapers and the Black Protest Movement: Their Historical Relationship, 1827-1945," *Phylon* 43, no. 1 (1982), 1-14; Thomas C. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka, Kansas, 1865-1915: A Social History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 83-85; and Lerone Bennett Jr., *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America* 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 1987; Paperback, New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 340.

<sup>19</sup>See Pride, "Negro Newspapers: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," 180-81. Henry G. La Brie III stated that about 50 newspapers had published prior the Civil War, and the number grew to more the 1,200 by 1900. See La Brie's *A Survey of Black Newspapers*.

<sup>20</sup>Kessler, 21-47; and Bernell E. Tripp, "The Media and Community Cohesiveness," in *The Significance of the Media in American History*, eds. James D. Startt and Wm. David Sloan, 147-167 (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 1994).

<sup>21</sup>As the impetus for his study, Detweiler, in part, credited a work by Robert T. Kerlin, *The Voice of the Negro 1919* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920). Kerlin compiled excerpts from black newspapers published during the four months after the Washington riot in 1919 as a way to convey reaction of blacks to the riot, as well as their treatment during and following World War I.

<sup>22</sup>Detweiler, 37.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 32-78. Some historians have challenged Detweiler's assertion that "only anti-slavery agitation . . . made the press possible to Negroes in this period" (p. 39). Among the factors overlooked include the rising literacy rate, a challenge rooted in self-determination against racism, and a forum unavailable in the general press. See Bernell E. Tripp, *Origins of the Black Press: New York, 1827-1847* (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 1992).

<sup>24</sup>Detweiler, 53.

<sup>25</sup>Among the late-nineteenth-century newspapers mentioned were the *Washington Bee*, the *Indianapolis Freeman*, the *New York Age*, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, and the *Richmond Planet*. He also noted the *Topeka Plaindealer*, a paper that began in 1899 (See Detweiler, 53-61).

<sup>26</sup>See Armistead S. Pride, "A Register and History of Negro Newspapers of the United States: 1827-1950" (Unpublished diss., Northwestern University, 1950). According to Pride and others, the rising literacy rate was a primary factor contributing to the growth of the press after the Civil War. Also see Pride, "Newspapers: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," 179-188; Armistead S. Pride, *Negro Newspapers on Microfilm: A Selected List*, Washington, Library of Congress, Photoduplication Service, 1953; and Pride, "Negro Newspaper in the United States," 141-149.

<sup>27</sup>Pride, "Register," 90.

<sup>28</sup>Wilson agreed to take on the task of completing the research begun by Pride in the late 1940s.

<sup>29</sup>Pride and Wilson, 66. See also Footnote 5.

<sup>30</sup>Wolseley, *Black Press, U.S.A.*

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 38-42.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 43-61.

<sup>33</sup>See Emma Lou Thornbrough, "American Negro Newspapers, 1880-1914," *Business History Review* 50, no. 4 (Winter, 1966): 467-490; T. Ella Strother, "The Race-advocacy Function of the Black Press," *Black American Literature Forum* 12, no. 3 (1978): 92-99; O'Kelly, 1-14; Kessler, 21-47; Tripp, "Media and Community Cohesiveness," 147-67; and David Domke, "The Black Press in the 'Nadir' of African Americans," *Journalism History* 20, nos. 3-4 (Autumn-Winter, 1994): 131-38.

<sup>34</sup>Thornbrough, 490.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 472-485.

<sup>36</sup>Tripp, "Media and Community Cohesiveness," 147-167.

<sup>37</sup>Kessler, 34-40.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 35-39; Strother, 92-99; O'Kelly, 1-14.

<sup>39</sup>See Henry Lewis Suggs, ed., *The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983); Berardi and Segady, 217-230; Henry Lewis Suggs, ed., *The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865-1985* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996); and Julius Eric Thompson, *The Black Press in Mississippi, 1865-1985: A Directory* (West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 1988).

<sup>40</sup>See Darrel E. Bigham, "The Black Press in Indiana, 1870-1985," in *The Black Press in the Middle West*, ed. Henry Lewis Suggs, 49-69 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996).

<sup>41</sup>See Henry Lewis Suggs, "The Black Press, Black Migration, and the Transplantation of Culture on the Great Plains of South Dakota, 1865-1985," in *The Black Press in the Middle West*, ed. Suggs, 297-323 (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1996).

<sup>42</sup>Tripp, "Media and Community Cohesiveness," 147-167; and Kevin Kusmer, "The Black Urban Experience in History," in *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Darlene Clark Hines 91-122 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986).

<sup>43</sup>Rodger Streitmatter, *Raising Her Voice: African-American Women Journalists Who Changed History* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 49-60; and Emma Lou Thornbrough, *T. Thomas Fortune: Militant Journalist* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972).

<sup>44</sup>I. Garland Penn, *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors* (Springfield, MA: Willey & Co., 1891; Reprint, Salem, NH: Ayer Company, 1964).

<sup>45</sup>See Pride, "Register," 6-7. Pride found that at least six other newspapers, one as early as 1862, had been established in other Southern states before the arrival of the *Colored American* in October 1865.

<sup>46</sup>For biographical information on Kansas's editors Waller, Townsend, and Taylor, see Penn's *Afro-American Press*, 187, 189-193; 253; 312-313.

<sup>47</sup>Wolseley, 53-60.

<sup>48</sup>See Pride and Wilson, *A History of the Black Press*, 97-125; Stephen R. Fox, *The Guardian of Boston: William Monroe Trotter* (New York: Atheneum, 1970); Thornbrough, *T. Thomas Fortune*; Willard B. Gatewood Jr., "Edward E. Cooper & '10 Greatest Negroes' of 1890," *Negro History Bulletin* 40, no. 1 (1977): 708-710; Willard B. Gatewood Jr., "Edward E. Cooper, Black Journalist," *Journalism Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (Summer 1978): 269-75; Mildred L. Thompson, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett: An Exploratory Study of an American Black Woman, 1893-1930* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson, 1990); Summer E. Stevens and Owen V. Johnson, "From Black Politics to Black Community: Harry C. Smith and the Cleveland 'Gazette,'" *Journalism Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (1990): 1090-1102; Rodger Streitmatter, "Gertrude Bustill Mossell: Guiding Voice of Newly Freed Blacks" and "Ida B. Wells-Barnett: Militant Crusader Against Lynching," in *Raising Her Voice: African-American Women Journalists Who Changed History* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994): 37-60; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "'To Howl Loudly': John Mitchell Jr. and His Campaign Against Lynching in Virginia," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 22, No. 3 (Winter 1991): 325-341; Donna L. Dickerson, "George T. Ruby: Reconstruction Politician/Journalist," *American Journalism* 15, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 51-68; Marvin D. Jeter, "H. J. Lewis and His Family in

Indiana and Beyond, 1889-1990s," in *Indiana's African-American Heritage: Essays from "Black History & Notes,"* ed. Wilma L. Gibbs, 161-176 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993); David Domke, "Journalists, Framing, and Discourse About Race Relations," *Journalism & Mass Communication Monographs* 164 (December 1997): 1-55; Albert Kreiling, "The Rise of the Black Press in Chicago," *Journalism History* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1977-78): 132-136, 156; and Hayward Farrar, *The Baltimore "Afro-American," 1892-1950* (Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 1998).

<sup>49</sup>Thornbrough, T. Thomas Fortune; and Fox, *Guardian of Boston.*

<sup>50</sup>Pride and Wilson, 120-124.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 121; August Meier, *Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1963), 168.

<sup>52</sup>Gatewood, "Edward E. Cooper, Black Journalist," 269-275; and Willard B. Gatewood Jr., ed., *Slave and Freeman: The Autobiography of George L. Knox* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1979), 3-40.

<sup>53</sup>Thompson, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett*. For other works written about Wells-Barnett, see Streitmatter, *Raising Her Voice*, 49-60; Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1984); Gail Bederman, "'Civilization,' the Decline of Middle-Class Manliness, and Ida B. Wells's Antilynching Campaign (1892-94)," *Radical History Review* 52 (Winter 1992): 5-30; Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993); Shirley W. Logan, "Rhetorical Strategies in Ida B. Wells's 'Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases,'" *Sage* 13, no. 1 (Summer 1991): 3-9; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Style and Content in the Rhetoric of Early Afro-American Feminists," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72 (1986): 434-445; Melba Joyce Boyd, "Canon Configuration for Ida B. Wells-Barnett," *The Black Scholar* 24, no. 1 (1994): 8-13; and Linda O. McMurry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>54</sup>Thompson, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett*, 5-6.

<sup>55</sup>Ralph L. Crowder, "John Edward Bruce and the Value of Knowing the Past: Politician, Journalist, and Self-trained Historian of the African Diaspora, 1856-1924," (Unpublished diss., University of Kansas, 1994); Dickerson, 51-68; Gatewood, "Edward E. Cooper," 269-275; Streitmatter, *Raising Her Voice*; Thompson, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett*; Thornbrough, *T. Thomas Fortune*; and Randall B. Woods, *A Black Odyssey: John Lewis Waller and the Promise of American Life, 1878-1900* (Lawrence, KS: Regents of Kansas Press, 1981).

<sup>56</sup>For examples, see Wolsey, 41-42; Wm. David Sloan and James D. Startt, eds., *The Media in America* (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 1996), 298; and Jean Folkerts and Dwight Teeter, *Voices of a Nation: A History of the Media in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: MacMillan, 1998). In the earliest history of women journalists, *Ladies of the Press* (New York: Harper, 1936), Ishbel Ross did not even include black women. Rodger Streitmatter attempted to rectify the dearth of historical accounts of black women journalists during the nineteenth century. See Streitmatter, *Raising Her Voice*.

<sup>57</sup>See Footnote 46.

<sup>58</sup>Woods, *Black Odyssey*.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 200-203.

<sup>60</sup>Randall B. Woods, "C. H. J. Taylor and the Movement for Black Political Independence, 1882-1896," *Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 122-135.

<sup>61</sup>Moten, "Negro Press of Kansas." Pride extensively quoted Moten in the section on the Kansas newspapers in his dissertation, "A Register and History of Negro Newspapers in the United States: 1827-1950," 90-94.

<sup>62</sup>Dann, *Black Press, 1827-1890*.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 181, 230, 289.

<sup>64</sup>Marie Deacon, "Kansas as the Promised Land: The View of the Black Press, 1890-1900," (Unpublished master's thesis, University of Arkansas, 1973).

<sup>65</sup>The only papers Deacon mentioned beyond the northeastern area were the *Parsons Weekly Blade* and the *National Reflector* of Wichita.

<sup>66</sup>Smith, "Search for Hope and Equality in Kansas," 107-134.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 113, 116.

<sup>68</sup>Teresa C. Klassen and Owen V. Johnson, "Sharpening of the *Blade*: Black Consciousness in Kansas, 1892-97," *Journalism Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (1986): 305-310.

<sup>69</sup>Arnold Cooper, "'Protection to All, Discrimination to None': The *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 1892-1900," *Kansas History* 9 (Summer 1986): 58-71.

<sup>70</sup>Don W. Wilson, "Barbed Words on the Frontier: Early Kansas Newspaper Editors," *Kansas History* 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1978): 147-154.

PART ONE: FORMING A FOUNDATION

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## CHAPTER 2

### WESTWARD MIGRATION

In the spring of 1860, five-year-old William Bolden Townsend, born a slave near Huntsville, Alabama, traveled with his mother to Kansas.<sup>1</sup> Both the boy and his mother had been emancipated by his grandfather in 1857. They were among an early wave of freed blacks and slaves who left the Deep South,<sup>2</sup> as well as border states Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee, and migrated west.<sup>3</sup> Young Townsend and his mother settled in Leavenworth, a growing town that became home for several thousands of African Americans between 1860 and 1870.<sup>4</sup> Years later, Townsend would become a political leader in Kansas and a prominent Leavenworth newspaper editor.

The migration of blacks to Kansas contributed to the westward expansion of the black press after the Civil War. As African Americans settled in urban and rural areas in Kansas, newspapers became integral contributors in building the social structure of black communities such as Leavenworth. Not only did newspapers furnish needed information for hometown readers, but the papers also conveyed news from other communities, near and distant. Various editors, reporters, correspondents, and agents

combined their efforts to link readers in different areas of the state, thus establishing and maintaining ties that extended well beyond local communities.

Black newspapers in Kansas communities primarily developed in northeast, southeast, and southwest regions of the state in the late-nineteenth century. This study examines six prominent newspapers that targeted black readers during the 1880s and 1890s: *The American Citizen of Kansas City*, the *Leavenworth Advocate*, the *Leavenworth Herald*, the *Kansas State Ledger* of Topeka, the *Parsons Weekly Blade*, and the *National Reflector* of Wichita. Examination of these newspapers, chosen because of their longevity, the influence of their editors, and their recognition by journalistic peers and readers, reveals viable ways the Kansas black press fostered ties among communities and contributed to shared identities among its readers.

#### Black Communities in Kansas

The story of the black press in Kansas cannot be told without understanding how black communities developed in the state. Black community life started between 1860 and 1870. In 1860, one year prior to statehood, African Americans numbered 625 out of a population of 107,204.<sup>5</sup> In the years that followed, several thousand newly emancipated ex-slaves moved to the state. Many set their sights on land they associated with freedom, land where John Brown militantly campaigned for the abolitionist cause and

runaway slaves traveled along the Underground Railroad to stations in Topeka and Lawrence. By 1870, the overall Kansas population increased three-fold, and some 17,000, or 4.7 percent, were African Americans, more than half of whom lived in four northeastern cities--Leavenworth, Lawrence, Atchison, and Wyandotte.<sup>6</sup>

In the late 1870s and early 1880s, a mass exodus of blacks from the South made their way to Kansas. They were without specific directions or preparations but with hopes of improving the economic, social, and political conditions they faced during the post-Reconstruction years. The *Colored Citizen* of Topeka, one of the state's earliest black-owned newspapers, welcomed migrants willing to work and contribute to organizing early settlements.<sup>7</sup> "We have plenty of room and plenty of land for all," wrote the *Colored Citizen* editor.<sup>8</sup> The Exodusters, as these immigrants came to be called, joined those blacks already residing in the state, some having lived there for more than twenty years.<sup>9</sup>

The Exodusters made their way to the plains by railroad, steamboat, and foot, settling in cities, towns, and rural areas in eastern Kansas.<sup>10</sup> A majority of the newcomers who had traveled from St. Louis by boat on the Missouri River flooded into Wyandotte (later Kansas City), on the Kansas side of the river. Between February and April in 1870, more than 1,300 refugees arrived there, most destitute and ill-prepared for life on the Kansas

prairies.<sup>11</sup> Of those who disembarked in Wyandotte, many were dispersed to other river communities in northeast Kansas.<sup>12</sup>

Several organized groups established themselves in all-black colonies in Kansas prior to the massive migration of 1879. Benjamin "Pap" Singleton of the Tennessee Real Estate and Homestead Association oversaw several settlements, including Dunlap colony in Morris County in 1878. A year earlier, a core group of thirty settlers originally from Kentucky had moved to the town site of Nicodemus in northwestern Kansas. This colony in Graham County proved to be one of the most successful. Several years after its founding, the town reportedly had grown to about 700 residents, and by the mid-1880s it supported two newspapers, along with other business enterprises, including three drug stores, several grocery stores, a bank, and four hotels.<sup>13</sup>

Like many of those who went to Nicodemus, a large number of Southern immigrants came to Kansas with hopes of becoming homesteaders and landowners.<sup>14</sup> Some of the earlier migrants brought funds and obtained government homesteads or purchased land for farming.<sup>15</sup> Kansas was the closest western state with land available for black homesteading, made possible by the 1862 Homestead Law. Homesteaders could either pay a small filing fee for allocated tracts of 160 acres and work to improve the property for five years, or they could decide to buy the land for \$1.25 per acre after living there six months. Many of the Exodusters, however,

could not afford to buy or maintain the land so they eventually made their homes in urban areas, where they sought odd jobs or earned wages working as laborers and domestics.<sup>16</sup>

In comparison to the South, where close to 90 percent of the nation's black population lived, relatively few African Americans lived in Kansas in the late-nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup> In 1880, Kansas, with its black population of 43,107, ranked nineteenth out of forty states.<sup>18</sup> The densest populations were found northeastern Kansas in Topeka, Leavenworth, Atchison, Wyandotte, and Lawrence. Other concentrations of African Americans could be found in southeastern and southwestern areas of the state, with Parsons and Wichita having the most blacks.<sup>19</sup> In 1890, about 800 blacks lived in Parsons, a city of 6,000.<sup>20</sup> Wichita's black population was about 1,250--approximately 5.2 percent of the nearly 23,000 residents.<sup>21</sup> By 1895, the number had grown to 6 percent.<sup>22</sup> As these and other black communities developed, newspapers owned and operated by blacks soon appeared, published primarily in the three regions.

#### Community-building Institutions

Newspapers played an essential role in the community, being a conduit of much-needed information for everyday life. Notices for school activities, religious services, social and political meetings, and upcoming events were common fare in the newspapers. The *Kansas State Ledger*, for example, reminded Topeka parents to be sure to prepare

their students "with sufficient books and stationary" for the first day of classes.<sup>23</sup>

Newspapers also kept readers informed about pertinent issues, such as employment, politics, and race relations, as well as events in the South, where many of the readers had originated. Black editors were influential in shaping and molding public opinion through their newspapers, which acted as unifying mechanisms that drew readers together as editors provided particular points of view about events, topics, or issues.<sup>24</sup> Such was the case when Leavenworth Advocate editor W. B. Townsend campaigned against the gambling shops in Leavenworth, an issue he believed demanded "the time and attention of every citizen of the community."<sup>25</sup> Townsend spurred Advocate readers to speak out against the illegal operations:

To consider what is to become of us in the future if we sit supinely by and fail to raise our voices against an evil which we all feel and know cannot be under any circumstances, productive of good now or remotely--then we would not be justified in countenancing the game because of its illegality and because of its influence upon the minds of our boys and girls.<sup>26</sup>

After hearing reports that law officers had arrested several gambling house proprietors, the Advocate commended the city's police commissioners for taking action and enforcing the laws.<sup>27</sup>

Newspapers not only apprised black citizens about community concerns, but the papers also publicized news of

black society, which was virtually ignored by most general newspapers in Kansas. Coverage of weddings, church services, music concerts, and other social events could be found in a paper's local news section. One such account was the *Wichita Globe*'s descriptive account of the twentieth birthday party for Samuel W. Jones. The paper listed those in attendance and noted that the guest of honor received several gifts, including "a solid silver badge inlaid with a gold slide tramble [sic] horn, also bearing an inscription relative to his 20th birthday."<sup>28</sup> Jones, a slide trombone player, had toured with a minstrel band before returning to Wichita to learn the printer's trade from D. L. Robinson, editor of the *Globe*, one of the first black newspapers in the city.<sup>29</sup>

The papers also carried accounts of notable achievements of those with ties to the community, often relaying updates about former residents who had moved to other localities. The *Leavenworth Herald* praised former *Leavenworth Advocate* editor and musician N. Clark Smith, "an old Leavenworth boy who lives in Wichita," after his composition "Frederick Douglass Funeral March" was published by S. Bainard & Son, a Chicago company.<sup>30</sup> The *Herald*, which reprinted accounts of Smith's success from newspapers in Wichita, added: "We are glad to know that Clark has met with good luck and hope that this is only the beginning."<sup>31</sup>

While editors excerpted some information from other papers, they also received news tips from those who congregated at the newspaper office, a central meeting place for area residents and for out-of-town visitors. Local callers included those of all ages, even young people such as Parsons high school students Lizzie Smith and Anna Hamby, who stopped by to notify *Blade* editor S. O. Clayton that "they were greatly pleased with the beginning of school" and expected to be on the graduation roll the following spring.<sup>32</sup> Visits from out-of-town guests also were reported in the newspapers. James Beck, ex-deputy coal oil inspector for the state and "a prominent citizen of Wamego, was a pleasant caller this week," wrote the *American Citizen* of the newsworthy visitor to its Kansas City office.<sup>33</sup> Beck was employed in the engineering department of the state penitentiary, "a position awarded him under the present state administration and the first time filled by a Negro."<sup>34</sup>

As a mass medium, black newspapers targeted an audience marginalized within American society. In most Kansas cities, blacks and whites lived in segregated residential areas that were marked by geographic boundaries.<sup>35</sup> The first mention of blacks in Topeka, founded by the Emigrant Aid Company in 1854, can be found in the 1865 state census, which recorded more than 12,000 African Americans statewide.<sup>36</sup> Blacks lived in areas throughout Topeka prior to 1875, but after the arrival of the

Exodusters, all-black neighborhoods of Remonsville, Up in the Sands, and Tennesseeetown became prominent demographic sectors in the city.<sup>37</sup> In Wichita, about 100 miles southwest of Topeka, African Americans lived in a racially segregated area near the Sedgwick County courthouse.<sup>38</sup> In these and other cities with black enclaves, black customers patronized black-owned business establishments such as grocery stores, drug stores, ice cream parlors, barbershops, and print shops.

Black churches, like black newspapers, formed fundamental institutions of the communities, which, along with numerous literary clubs and fraternal orders, were at the center of religious and social activities.<sup>39</sup> In Leavenworth, the African Methodist Episcopal Church and several Baptist churches were organized in the early 1860s.<sup>40</sup> The Second Baptist Church of Topeka, later called the First African Baptist Church, had its first service in 1865, and St. John A. M. E. Church, which started as a prayer group in 1868, formally commenced in 1878.<sup>41</sup> By 1890, the Kansas conference of A. M. E. churches, organized in 1876 by the Rev. Paul Quinn, had grown to nearly 70 churches.<sup>42</sup> In Wyandotte, five churches formed before the Exodus of 1879, and that number reached fourteen by 1900.<sup>43</sup>

The fact that many blacks in Kansas lived in segregated areas, frequented black-owned businesses, and worshipped in black churches reflected an American society that endorsed different social spheres for blacks and

whites.<sup>44</sup> By 1896, U.S. constitutional law supported the separation between the races with the decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Though the separation of races in Kansas and other Western states was not as rigid as in the South, delegates attending a Baptist convention in St. Louis adopted a plank that denounced the Supreme Court's ruling. In attendance was the Rev. M. L. Copeland, interim editor of the *National Reflector* and minister of the Second Baptist Church in Wichita. He endorsed the plank, which read as follows:

We regret the action of the Supreme court [sic] which strips the Negro of his rights to travel as a citizen untrammeled on the public highways. While we testify to our allegiance to part and principles, we are not unmindful of the great disabilities under which we labor as a race, in spite of 33 years of quasi freedom. We still have faith in God and and [sic] in the patriotism of the American people, and we call upon all Christians to join hands with us against the baleful spirit of race discrimination.<sup>45</sup>

The constitutional interpretation of the separate-but-equal ruling reinforced the concept of parallel development, which influenced racial relations between blacks and whites in Kansas. Basically, parallel development meant that though blacks deserved equal rights before the law, they should have a separate place in society and develop independently. A distinction was made between the rights of social equality and those of civil equality. Thus, whites could justify the idea of excluding

blacks from hospitals, hotels, restaurants, and other areas that were not considered essential for their well-being.<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, even though African Americans in Kansas did not experience the overt discrimination and prejudice of the South, they still could face exclusion, segregation, or integration when accessing public facilities, encountering the legal system, or seeking employment. For example, hotels, restaurants, and theaters were segregated; some even refused service to black patrons. Also, blacks were excluded from white churches and hospitals. In 1898, Douglass Hospital was established in Kansas City because black doctors were not allowed to perform surgery in the white-run hospitals.<sup>47</sup> While the Kansas legislature had mandated integrated secondary schools in 1879, most first-class cities (population of 15,000 or more) had segregated primary schools.<sup>48</sup> One exception was Wichita, where public schools remained integrated until 1906.<sup>49</sup>

#### Tri-regional Area in Eastern Kansas

In the late-nineteenth century, about 95 percent of Kansas' African-American population lived in the eastern half of state.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, most of the black newspapers were published there, primarily in those towns and cities with distinct black-populated neighborhoods. These cities were clustered in the northeast, southeast, and southwest regions (see Appendix A). Most of the newspapers were distributed to readers throughout the state, which

contributed to interconnectedness among black communities in Kansas.

#### Northeast Region

The hub of activity for African Americans in Kansas was the northeast corner of the state. In 1890, the majority of black citizens lived along the Missouri River on the Kansas-Missouri border in Leavenworth, Wyandotte, and Atchison counties, and in adjacent Douglas and Shawnee counties.<sup>51</sup> Since the years of "Bleeding Kansas," beginning in 1854, blacks had flocked to Leavenworth, Wyandotte, Atchison, Lawrence, and Topeka, which were all communities begun when pro-slavery and anti-slavery groups settled in a terrain characterized by rolling hills and steep-bluffed rivers. These towns became the sites where the majority of black-owned newspapers were published, such as the *Topeka Kansas Herald*, one of the papers that had urged blacks to migrate west.<sup>52</sup> By the mid-1880s, nearly ten newspapers had appeared in the communities of Topeka, Leavenworth, and Lawrence, though most were short-lived.<sup>53</sup>

One of the longest-running black newspapers in Kansas was the *American Citizen*. Founded in Topeka by John L. Waller and his cousin Anthony Mortin in February 1888, the *American Citizen* was published until 1907.<sup>54</sup> Waller previously had moved from Lawrence to Topeka, where he established a law office with another black attorney. The *Citizen* was affiliated first with the Republican Party, and most likely party subsidized the paper since editor Waller

was a staunch Republican and was active in politics in the 1880s, a time when blacks were a significant political force in Kansas.<sup>55</sup> Waller was born a slave in New Madrid County, Missouri, in 1850.<sup>56</sup> As an adolescent, he and his family had relocated to Iowa, where Waller eventually received training as a lawyer.<sup>57</sup>

Waller was among a number of young black professionals who migrated to Kansas in the late 1870s. Soon after arriving in Kansas, he set up his law practice and was the first black attorney to litigate cases in the Leavenworth courts.<sup>58</sup> Prior to managing the *Citizen*, Waller had also edited the *Western Recorder* in Lawrence in 1884. He would return to the *Citizen* several times in different capacities and again as editor in 1896.<sup>59</sup>

Eighteen months after its founding, the *American Citizen* moved to Kansas City, with new editor W. T. McGuinn, who originally hailed from Baltimore. The paper had shifted from its Republican alliance to a nonpartisan stance, "devoted to the advancement and uplifting of the colored race, irrespective of party, politics or station."<sup>60</sup> McGuinn and business manager George Dudley were among those African Americans in Kansas who had grown disillusioned with the Republican Party and endorsed political independence, even though many blacks in Kansas maintained loyalty to the party of Lincoln.<sup>61</sup>

Besides the changes in location and political affiliation, the *American Citizen's* management decided to

do away with its past reliance on "patent back," a reference to readyprint or sheets of preprinted news copy.<sup>62</sup> Instead, the *Citizen* solicited more original material, filling the paper with news from correspondents in towns and cities throughout the state. With its new format, circulation numbers increased. "We are pleased to say that subscribers think that the paper has improved some lately and hope it will continue to do so," wrote Eva M. Jones, the *Citizen's* "energetic and wide-awake" agent in Lawrence.<sup>63</sup>

The editorial changes caught the attention of the *Citizen's* exchanges. Even the *New York Age*, edited by T. Thomas Fortune, acknowledged the paper had improved. "The removal of the *AMERICAN CITIZEN* from Topeka to Kansas City seems to have had a most beneficial effect. It has assumed a new dress of type and its utterances are full of vigor," Fortune praised in the *Age*.<sup>64</sup>

By February 1891, the *Citizen* had survived its third year, and Charles H. J. Taylor had assumed editorship. Taylor, a Democrat and ex-minister to Liberia, promoted political independence for blacks, which made him well suited for the *American Citizen's* strong nonpartisan stance. Born in 1856 in Marion, Alabama, Taylor grew up in Savannah, Georgia, and earned a degree in English at the University of Michigan.<sup>65</sup> In 1877 he was admitted to the bar in Indiana.<sup>66</sup> Taylor had served as assistant city attorney of Kansas City before accepting a political appointment as

minister to Liberia. He was often invited to lecture in cities throughout the United States, taking the opportunity to lure blacks away from their loyalty to the Republican Party.<sup>67</sup> As editor, "Old Alphabet," regularly articulated his assimilationist views on the *Citizen's* front page.<sup>68</sup>

Frequently out of town for speaking engagements and political visits, Taylor relied on the editorial work of several women to complete the weekly paper. Associate editor Mrs. Frances J. Jackson, "one of the best lady writers in town," joined the paper's staff in June 1891.<sup>69</sup> Mrs. Mary E. Nero, city editor and soliciting agent, gathered news from the Missouri side of the city and wrote brief personals in the *American Citizen*.<sup>70</sup> Mrs. C. H. J. Taylor gathered local news for Kansas City, Kansas, and on occasion wrote columns of interest to women readers.<sup>71</sup>

The *American Citizen*, aided by its capable staff, enabled Taylor to maintain a place in the national spotlight. Following his appointment as Recorder of Deeds in 1894, Taylor left Kansas City for Washington, D.C.<sup>72</sup> Even though the *Citizen* lost its charismatic editor, the paper managed to survive for more than a decade because of the diligence and commitment of its business manager, George A. Dudley.<sup>73</sup>

Another center of activity for African Americans in northeast Kansas was Leavenworth, where the *Advocate* started publication in August 1888. The paper proclaimed itself to be "Non-sectional in religion; Conservative in

leader-ship; Independent in politics and thoroughly identified with all interests of the Colored race."<sup>74</sup> In one of the first issues, editors Smith and Chestina noted their intention for the paper to live up to its name:

The ADVOCATE is for the right side in all cases. We are up before our people as a banner; and to falter, we are determined never to do. We endeavor to show up every thing in its proper form, be it good or bad.<sup>75</sup>

Initially, the four-page sheet sold for \$1.50 per year or 20 cents each month and relied on plate matter, or readyprint, for much of its copy, as did most of the black newspapers during this time.<sup>76</sup> To save money, the editors purchased these partially printed newspapers and then filled in local news, editorials, and advertisements, a practice also common among white newspapers.<sup>77</sup> Some papers also used "boilerplate," pre-etched printing plates, as a supplement or substitute for readyprint.<sup>78</sup>

When William Bolden Townsend took over as editor in April 1889, more home-generated copy appeared in the paper. W. B. Townsend gained his early journalism experience as correspondent for *The Colored Citizen* of Fort Scott, Kansas, in 1876. Two years later he became associate editor for *The Radical*, another black newspaper.<sup>79</sup> Townsend came to Leavenworth as a child in 1860, obtaining a "liberal education" at the city's State Normal School.<sup>80</sup> As a young man, Townsend went to Mississippi to teach school, "but finding the treatment of his people so inhuman, and himself meeting many hardships," he returned to Kansas.<sup>81</sup> Once back

in Leavenworth, he worked as a mail carrier until he attended the University of Kansas in Lawrence to study law. He graduated as valedictorian from a class of twenty-two in 1891.<sup>82</sup>

Over the years, Townsend was an outspoken critic of racially separated schools, and he earned the reputation as an agitator for civil rights.<sup>83</sup> After the Kansas legislature passed a law that sanctioned separate primary schools in larger cities, enabling school boards to discriminate against black students, the Advocate urged black parents to withdraw their children from colored schools. "Each year since the passage of that pernicious law, your Editor, assisted by a few faithful friends of the race, has been pleading with the legislatures to repeal that law," wrote Townsend.<sup>84</sup>

Townsend, on occasion, enlisted support from his journalistic colleagues. Both Townsend and former *American Citizen* editor John L. Waller pressed for integrated access to public facilities.<sup>85</sup> The editor of the *Atchison Blade* praised his colleague as a "man of family, character, and one who fights fearlessly and incessantly for his people. He has endured many insults and undergone many murderous threats because of his loyalty for a long suffering people."<sup>86</sup>

The courts, according to Townsend, were an effective means through which blacks could gain civil rights.<sup>87</sup> In all likelihood, that conviction spurred Townsend to complete

his law degree, in spite of weekly commutes between Lawrence and Leavenworth as he juggled being student, newspaper editor, and family man.

Even though Townsend tried to maintain the quality of the Advocate's coverage, his absence from the office affected the paper. Readership appeared to wane and readyprint, rather than original copy, filled much of the newspaper.<sup>88</sup> Consequently, Blanche Ketene Bruce, a Leavenworth teacher, agreed to purchase a share of the paper in 1890 and serve as co-editor, managing the paper in Townsend's absence.<sup>89</sup>

Born in 1859 on a farm near Brunswick, Missouri, Blanche Ketene Bruce came to Kansas as a young man in his early twenties.<sup>90</sup> In 1885, Bruce was the first black student to graduate from the University of Kansas in Lawrence.<sup>91</sup> He settled in Leavenworth after being hired as principal of the South Leavenworth Colored School, later renamed Sumner School.<sup>92</sup> Bruce, sometimes referred to as B. K. Bruce Jr., was the namesake of his uncle, Blanche Kelso Bruce, who served as a United States senator for Mississippi during Reconstruction. Another uncle, H. C. Bruce, had fled to Leavenworth from Missouri in 1864 to escape slavery.<sup>93</sup>

Townsend and Bruce, like many blacks in Kansas, viewed participation in politics as a mechanism through which they could advance the cause of full citizenship for African Americans.<sup>94</sup> Both men were loyal Republicans and active in local and state politics. Since before the Civil War,

African Americans had turned to politics as a way to gain equality. Once suffrage was granted, black voters helped determine the outcome of some elections.<sup>95</sup> Many blacks in Kansas sided with the party of Lincoln in gratitude for abolishing slavery, even though they frequently encountered indifference to their concerns from white Republican-elected officials.<sup>96</sup>

The Advocate and other black newspapers conveyed election information, endorsed candidates, and urged readers to register and vote.<sup>97</sup> Townsend and Bruce persistently campaigned for the nomination and election of black candidates for local and state offices. The Advocate co-editors and *Citizen* editor W. T. McGuinn staged a successful convention in Salina that mobilized black leaders in Kansas to support John L. Waller as the Republican nominee for state auditor in 1890. Blacks in Kansas viewed the election of a black state auditor as a feasible goal. Edward G. McCabe of Graham County had served in that position from 1882 to 1886. Despite the efforts of the Advocate and *Citizen* editors, Waller lost the nomination to a white man at the state convention.<sup>98</sup>

Townsend eventually left the newspaper to practice law in Leavenworth, and the Advocate merged with the *Time-Observer* in Topeka in 1891.<sup>99</sup> Bruce's association with the Advocate had helped to increase his prominence in state politics. In 1892, Bruce captured the auditor nomination

and devoted much of his energy to winning the contest, but he lost in the general election.<sup>100</sup>

Several years later, Bruce made another effort at journalism and founded the *Leavenworth Herald*, a paper that ran from 1894 to 1898. According to Bruce, he established the *Herald* because blacks in Leavenworth and Kansas needed a newspaper that would present "to all citizens the brighter, nobler and manlier side of our people, a phase not gleaned from the daily press."<sup>101</sup> Readers would find lively, and sometimes heated, interchanges between the *Herald* and other newspapers in the state.

Over the years, numerous black newspapers were published in Topeka, where African Americans accounted for 20 percent of the population in 1890.<sup>102</sup> With the availability of "Afro-American journals," Topeka's black citizens should be "well acquainted with all the leading topics of the day," noted the *Parsons Blade*.<sup>103</sup> In many ways, Topeka was the cultural, political, and religious center for blacks in Kansas. Political activities were a mainstay of news. Correspondents in Topeka provided most black newspapers in Kansas with society happenings of the capital city's residents.

During the 1892 political campaign, Fred L. Jeltz founded *The Kansas State Ledger*, one of the city's more colorful newspapers. Jeltz, assisted by business manager W. W. Hail and niece Lulu Jeltz as city solicitor, assured readers that the *Ledger* was "no campaign paper only; but,

will stay in the race along with other newspapers."<sup>104</sup> Jeltz, who published the *Ledger* until its demise in 1906, pledged the paper would not print "indecent literature" in its columns, but "we will speak the truth and shun the wrong, on any party, faction, clique, league or connectives."<sup>105</sup> The *Ledger*, he purported, would seek harmony, reciprocity, the end of lynching, and the control of all railroads by the general government.<sup>106</sup>

Jeltz was active in local politics, having gained his early political experience in Mississippi, where he was born in Jackson in 1865.<sup>107</sup> He moved to Kansas around 1878 but did not settle permanently in Topeka until the late 1880s.<sup>108</sup> Of Jeltz's political fervor, a former Mississippi associate and schoolmate wrote: "Politically, he was, while in our state, a free thinker and a conspicuous and leading politician."<sup>109</sup> Though Jeltz began the *Ledger* as a Republican paper, he soon acted on his convictions that interests of African Americans must come before loyalty to any political party.

Following the 1892 election of a Populist governor and the defeat of several local black Republican candidates, Jeltz sparked both praise and controversy among black political leaders when he declared himself a political independent. During the weeks prior to the election, Jeltz denied rumors that he had shifted his loyalty from the Republican Party, even though the *Ledger* carried

endorsements for several Populist candidates.<sup>110</sup> Yet, following his decision to leave the party, Jeltz wrote:

We shall ever demand that the negro be respected, and asked an equal show with white men. . . . Ever since this paper has been in existence, it has been run under a republican management, and has worked faithfully for the success of the party. Hereafter, the paper will be independent, and will work for the party that will do the most toward giving the negro race the proper recognition that justly belongs to them. Each member of the management will be permitted to act as he may see fit.<sup>111</sup>

Like Dudley and Taylor of the *American Citizen*, Jeltz was among those blacks who had become disenchanted with unfulfilled promises made by the Republican Party.

While the November 1892 election provided impetus for founding the paper, Jeltz intended the *Ledger* to be a successful business venture. In hopes of attracting subscribers, he wanted to keep the four-page weekly a bargain, selling yearly subscriptions for only \$1.<sup>112</sup> With a contingent of committed agents and income from his printing business, circulation grew. In less than five months of operation, Jeltz and his agents had rounded up more than 2,000 subscribers, with nearly two-thirds of them living in the Topeka area.<sup>113</sup> Jeltz took pride in this accomplishment, noting eight months after its founding, that his paper was unlike any other black newspaper in Topeka. The *Ledger*, "even when [finances were] close and hard," had not missed delivering an issue for thirty-four consecutive weeks.<sup>114</sup>

To further increase the *State Ledger's* circulation and influence, F. L. Jeltz needed freedom to leave his business so he could travel to other cities in Kansas on behalf of the paper. He decided to recruit his brother Will from Springfield, Illinois, to manage the *Ledger*. Will Jeltz, who had briefly assisted with the paper the previous year, sent a telegram with his reply: "SPRINGFIELD, Ill., 5-5, '93. Dear F. L.: I will accept the management of your paper. Will start for Topeka at an early date. Yours, Will."<sup>115</sup>

F. L. Jeltz welcomed his brother's decision and noted several weeks after Will's arrival that he was "managing his position with the ability of a journalist."<sup>116</sup> With Will Jeltz in charge of the weekly paper, F. L. Jeltz decided to try his hand at publishing a daily evening edition. However, the *Daily Ledger*, one of several dailies attempted by black editors in Kansas, made only a brief appearance, after which Jeltz resumed editorial control of the weekly *Ledger*.<sup>117</sup>

#### Southeast Kansas

In the southeast area, which accounted for about 23 percent of the state's black population in 1890, the largest concentration lived in Bourbon, Cherokee, Labette, and Lyon counties.<sup>118</sup> Mining and farming had drawn a large number of African Americans to Labette and other counties that bordered the Indian Territory. Many migrants who came during the late 1870s and early 1880s had lived in Texas

before settling in Kansas. Most of them had traveled there on the "Katy," a reference to the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad, with hopes that Kansas would provide opportunities for a better life.<sup>119</sup> Parsons, founded in 1871, was an important town along the railroad line.<sup>120</sup> A coal and mining company, a foundry, and a flourmill were businesses established before 1880 that provided some employment opportunities for African Americans in Parsons and area communities.<sup>121</sup>

The *Parsons Weekly Blade* was the primary newspaper for readers in southeast Kansas from 1892 to 1900 and was credited as being a vital contributor to the development of Parsons' black community during the 1890s.<sup>122</sup> The paper urged readers to work hard, value education, seek gainful employment, and "develop strong, healthy principles" that would promote the race.<sup>123</sup> Its editors also spoke out against injustices, such as the lynching of a black man in nearby Cherokee County and a possible case of arson against a member of the community.<sup>124</sup>

One prominent Parsons black resident who hailed from Texas was Edward W. Dorsey, founder of the *Weekly Blade*. Over the years he became well-established, having worked at the National Flour Mill since moving to Parsons in 1879. When Dorsey started the paper, he named himself as president and Simeon O. Clayton as editor. Clayton took responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper, while barber Charles A. Morris saw to business matters.<sup>125</sup>

The officers of the *Blade* Publishing Company intended that "every colored citizen in the State [of Kansas]" would receive the paper so it could fulfill its purpose to "educate our people to think and act for themselves."<sup>126</sup> After seven months, income from printing orders that ranged from books to handbills had enabled the company to pay off the notes for its equipment.<sup>127</sup> Within a year of its founding, the four-page paper posted a circulation at about 1,200.<sup>128</sup> The newspaper office, located at 1907 Johnson Avenue, in the center of town, occupied the entire second floor of the building. Despite some financial solvency, at the annual stockholders meeting in January 1894 members expressed concern about delinquent subscribers, yet affirmed that the *Blade* was "on a firmer basis and with telling ambition. Protection to all. No discrimination against color."<sup>129</sup>

Clayton, who later was appointed to the city police force, stayed on as editor of the paper for two years.<sup>130</sup> After the interim tenures of part-time editors H. L. Dorsey and J. F. Johnson, E. W. Dorsey persuaded his son, J. Monroe Dorsey, to assume control of the paper and the printing business.<sup>131</sup> Monroe Dorsey, a printer and experienced newspaperman, was living in Omaha, where he had worked as the assistant editor for the black-owned *Progress* for two years.<sup>132</sup> In 1895, young Dorsey returned to Parsons with his wife Sarah, who had grown up in Wichita.<sup>133</sup>

In his first issue as editor, the younger Dorsey wrote, "[The *Blade*] shall ever be found advocating the rights of the Negro; his advancement; fighting oppression on every hand."<sup>134</sup> In politics, the *Blade* was Republican, but only "so long as the party sticks to [the *Blade*], but when the shutters are turned then [the paper] must look out for No. 1," he promised.<sup>135</sup>

Soon after arriving in Parsons, the new *Blade* editor set out to rekindle his ties with area communities and made frequent trips on the "Katy." The paper's correspondent in nearby Oswego wrote that editor Dorsey left a memorable impression on others "with his high hat and tailor-made suit, his immaculate front adorned by a solitaire, his patent leather shoes glistening in the sunlight."<sup>136</sup> When the *Blade* celebrated its fifth anniversary in 1897, Dorsey boasted that he now managed "an almost complete print plant that is second to none among our people west of the Mississippi River" and produced a financially sound newspaper each week.<sup>137</sup>

#### Southwest Kansas

Black newspapers in the northeast and the southeast regions of Kansas dominated much of the press coverage for blacks in the state during the late-nineteenth century. Yet, a number of newspapers were published in the southwestern region, where some 3,500 blacks made their home in 1890, predominantly in Sedgwick, Barton, Harvey, and Reno counties.<sup>138</sup> The region, distinguished by vast,

open landscapes and perhaps better described geographically as south-central Kansas, was considered "southwestern" because the western half of the state was a sparsely populated, largely undeveloped rural area. Most of the extant newspapers from the southwest region were published in the region's largest city, Wichita.

The *National Reflector* of Wichita became a strong voice for several years during the mid-1890s for blacks living in southwestern Kansas.<sup>139</sup> George Wesley White, the paper's first editor, moved to Wichita from Chicago, where he worked at the *Chicago Conservator*.<sup>140</sup> In Wichita, White had worked briefly in the mechanical and editorial departments of *The People's Friend*, a paper run by William Jeltz, brother of Fred L. Jeltz and previous manager of the *State Ledger* in Topeka.<sup>141</sup>

White started the *National Reflector* in 1895, acknowledging the bleak track record of other African-American journals:

Various weekly newspapers have launched out as "the organ of the colored citizens" in Sedgwick county and the city of Wichita . . . and their success and failure is too well-known to the old residents of the southwestern section of "the Sunflower state."<sup>142</sup>

Because blacks in Wichita continued to struggle "'neath the weight of prejudice in the various channels of life," White had determined to produce the *National Reflector*, despite the possibility of failure. He intended this journal to

"reflect creditably [sic] to the race by agitating against discrimination, prejudice, class legislation and mob violence . . . prevalent in this boasted 'land of the noble (?) [sic] and free.'"<sup>143</sup> Yearly subscriptions sold for \$1, and readers could purchase single copies for 3 cents.

National Reflector correspondents regularly sent in news from other towns and cities including Emporia, Hutchinson, Topeka, and Baxter Springs, though much of the four-page sheet was readyprint copy. White scraped together his living by running a print shop on Williams Street in the Crawford Opera House, leasing the equipment from B. V. and O. W. Kelley.<sup>144</sup> He managed to keep the *National Reflector* afloat for a year, but financial difficulties forced him to resign as editor and publisher. White, however, continued as the city editor for the duration of the paper.<sup>145</sup>

Consequently, the newspaper went through a series of editorial staff changes until Samuel W. Jones took over as publisher and editor in January 1897. Later that summer, William A. Bettis, back in the fold of the Republican Party after a brief time with the Populists, joined the staff as associate editor when the *National Reflector* absorbed the *Wichita Tribune*, a paper founded by Bettis with another businessman.<sup>146</sup> Jones and Bettis were long-time friends, having worked as business colleagues back in the late 1880s when they sold land during Wichita's real estate boom.<sup>147</sup>

Also, the men had been brothers-in-law since 1889, when Bettis married Jones' eldest sister.<sup>148</sup>

Both men had prior newspaper experience in Wichita. Jones, who grew up in Wichita, had learned several aspects of newspaper work since beginning in the 1880s.<sup>149</sup> He was associated with the *Wichita Globe* in 1887 as general solicitor, collecting for subscriptions and selling advertisements, before becoming the compositor and then assistant editor.<sup>150</sup> Several years later, Jones worked as print foreman for the *People's Friend* before becoming editor and publisher of the *National Baptist World* in Wichita in 1894.<sup>151</sup> While editing the newspaper, Jones served as a law enforcement officer. The citizens of Wichita had elected him as the city's first black public official, and he held the position of constable for two years.<sup>152</sup>

Bettis, on the other hand, had edited at least two other newspapers, the *Wichita Standard* and the *Kansas Headlight*, a short-lived Populist sheet in 1894, before starting the *Tribune* in Wichita.<sup>153</sup> A barber by trade, Bettis played an active role in the community, where he organized citywide events, established a reading room, and participated in local social activities and literary debates.<sup>154</sup>

By May 1897, Jones and Bettis owned and operated a profitable printing company that printed the *National Reflector*, with Jones as editor-in-chief, Bettis as

associate editor, and White as city editor.<sup>155</sup> The *National Reflector* staff markedly increased the amount of original copy in the paper by recruiting correspondents throughout Kansas.

#### Network of Black Newspapers

Black newspapers from the three regions of the state--the northeast, the southeast, and southwest--were an important factor in the lives of black residents in Kansas. The six newspapers introduced in this chapter, the *American Citizen*, the *Leavenworth Advocate*, the *Leavenworth Herald*, the *Kansas State Ledger*, the *Parsons Weekly Blade*, and the *National Reflector*, along with many others, were produced by men and women who recognized the value of the printed word in conveying information, exerting political influence, and building group identification. Their reach and influence was not limited to the geographic boundaries of local communities. Together, the black newspapers of Kansas helped extend a sense of community throughout the state by advocating for political and civil rights, promoting black-run businesses, and supporting black social institutions.

Over the years, most of the editors found that keeping their newspapers going was a daunting, and sometimes impossible, task. Jeltz of the *Kansas State Ledger* was among those who ran the following excerpt from the *American Citizen*:

We tell not what will come to us, but of one thing we are sure. . . . We know the tribulations, crosses, blows, heartaches and other afflictions of the negro press, for we have been there. One newspaper with a strong, brave black man in charge is worth more than a regiment of soldiers towards wiping out caste prejudice and making places for negroes in the sunshine of justice and fair play. If newspaper brethren are wise, and we think they are, they will begin a fight all along the line for the recognition of Nineteenth [sic] century negroes. . . ." <sup>156</sup>

These words affirmed the conviction of journalists in Kansas's black press to persist in their efforts.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Leavenworth Advocate, 13 June 1891.

<sup>2</sup>I. Garland Penn, *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors* (Springfield, MA: Willey & Co., 1891; Reprint, Salem, NH: Ayer Company, 1964), 312.

<sup>3</sup>Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 137.

<sup>4</sup>Randall B. Woods, *A Black Odyssey: John Lewis Waller and the Promise of American Life, 1878-1900* (Lawrence: Regents of Kansas Press, 1981), 11.

<sup>5</sup>1860 census data, "Historical United States Census Data Brower" [database online], accessed 22 October 2000, available from <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/censusbin/conesus/con.pl>; Internet.

<sup>6</sup>*Tenth Census: Statistics of the Population of the United States*, Department of the Interior, Census Office (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 48.

<sup>7</sup>See Chapter 1, Footnote 5.

<sup>8</sup>*Colored Citizen of Topeka*, 11 January 1879.

<sup>9</sup>Letter from Orrin M. Murray, Sr., to Richard Pankratz, 23 January 1978 (Kansas State Historical Society, K 325, Pam. v. 3, no 2); Leland George Smith, "The Early Negroes in Kansas" (Unpublished master's thesis, The University of Wichita, 1932), 62; Nell Irvin Painter, *The Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 146-147. Painter has pointed out that a gradual, yet steady flow of migrants arrived in Kansas prior to 1870. In fact, by 1880 more blacks in Kansas were native-born than had originated from another state.

<sup>10</sup>Nell Blythe Waldron, "Colonization in Kansas from 1861 to 1890" (Unpublished diss., Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, 1932), 128; Taylor, 135.

<sup>11</sup>Waldron, 128.

<sup>12</sup>Robert G. Athearn, *In Search of Canaan: Black Migration to Kansas, 1879-80* (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1978), 37-39; Painter, 159. The majority of the Exodusters settled in Wyandotte, Leavenworth, Lawrence, Topeka, and Atchison.

<sup>13</sup>Painter, 149-151; Kenneth Marvin Hamilton, *Black Towns and Profit: Promotion and Development in the Trans-Appalachian West, 1877-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 34.

<sup>14</sup>Taylor, 136; Athearn, 6, 7.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., Athearn, 76-79.

<sup>16</sup>Painter, 153.

<sup>17</sup>*Twelfth Census: 1900, Part I--Population* (Washington, DC: Government, 1892) cxii.

<sup>18</sup>1880 census data, "Historical U.S. Census Data Browser." In overall population, Kansas ranked twentieth among the states.

<sup>19</sup>Athearn, 191; Painter, 159; Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 79; H. Craig Miner, *Wichita: The Magic City* (Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum Association, 1988), 16, 47, 96.

While a large number of Exodusters from Texas had moved to Labette and Cherokee counties in 1879, the number of blacks in Sedgwick County increased significantly in the 1880s after the peak years of the Exodus.

<sup>20</sup>*Eleventh Census: Volume 1, Population of the United States* (Department of Interior, Washington, D.C., 1895), 458. According to the *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 15 October 1892, blacks numbered nearly 1,000, among a population of approximately 9,000 in Parsons.

<sup>21</sup>*Eleventh Census: 1890, Part I--Population* (Washington, DC: Government, 1901) 2, 549.

<sup>22</sup>Miner, 96.

<sup>23</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 26 August 1892.

<sup>24</sup>Bernell E. Tripp, "The Media and Community Cohesiveness," in *The Significance of the Media in American History*, eds. James D. Startt and Wm. David Sloan, 147-167 (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 1994).

<sup>25</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 28 June 1890.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 28 June 1890.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 21 June 1890.

<sup>28</sup>*Wichita Globe*, 18 March 1887.

<sup>29</sup>For a listing of extant black newspapers published in Wichita during this period, see "Black Newspapers," Kansas State Historical Society [online], accessed 30 September 2000, available from <http://www.kshs.org/library/blcknspr.htm>; Internet.

<sup>30</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 13 April 1895; Eva Diane Lyle-Smith, "Nathaniel Clark Smith (1877-1934): African American Musician, Music Educator and Composer" (Published diss., University of North Texas, 1993), 13-15. The Douglass march was published first by a company in England. Smith, a violinist and vocalist, founded the *Leavenworth Advocate* (*Leavenworth Advocate*, 18 August 1888). A year later, he sold his interest in the paper, choosing to pursue a career

of composing, teaching, and performing music (*Leavenworth Advocate*, 10 August 1889). While living in Wichita, Smith organized and directed the Kid Band, a group of young musicians. He also operated a music academy, where he gave lessons to both white and black students (*People's Friend*, Wichita, 24 May 1894; 27 July 1894; *Leavenworth Herald*, 9 June 1894).

Note: In tracking down biographical information about Smith, this researcher encountered a number of discrepancies. While Lyle-Smith gave his full name as "Nathaniel Clark Smith," this researcher has not found "Nathaniel" in primary sources. The *Leavenworth Herald* identified Smith's full name as "Noah Clark Smith" (See Lyle-Smith's dissertation, "Nathaniel Clark Smith," 1; *Leavenworth Herald*, 28 August 1897). The 1880 census records recorded his name as "Nora Smith" (perhaps a phonetic spelling of "Noah," written by the census worker), his occupation as printer, and his age as 14. The age suggests that Smith was born at least ten years prior to 1877, the year listed in several other sources for Smith's birth. Other newspaper excerpts indicated a birth year around 1867 or 1866 (See 1880 U.S. Census, Leavenworth, First Ward, p. 24; Joseph Boris, ed., *Who's Who's in Colored America, 1928-1929*, 2nd ed. [book online], New York: Who's Who in Colored America, Corp., 1929, 432, Chadwyck-Healey African American Biographical Database, accessed 22 October 2000, available from <http://aabd.chadwyck.com>, Internet; Lyle-Smith, "Nathaniel Clark Smith," 1; *People's Friend*, 3 August 1894; *Leavenworth Herald*, 13 July 1895).

Two scholars attempting to unravel this mystery confirmed finding similar contradictions (Marian Ohman, a music education historian, in a phone conversation with researcher, 30 May 2000, and in written correspondence to researcher, 31 May 2000; Teresa Gibson, library assistant for N. Clark Smith Collection, Miller Nichols Library, Kansas City, Missouri, in an e-mail sent to researcher, 30 May 2000).

<sup>31</sup> *Leavenworth Herald*, 13 April 1895.

<sup>32</sup> *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 1 October 1892.

<sup>33</sup> *American Citizen*, 4 June 1897. The following year, Lt. Col. Beck commanded the Twenty-third Regiment, Kansas

Volunteer Infantry, the only black regiment led by black officers during the Spanish-American War. See Willard B. Gatewood Jr., "Kansas Negroes in the Spanish-American War." *The Kansas Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1971): 300-313.

<sup>34</sup>*American Citizen*, 4 June 1897.

<sup>35</sup>Miner, 97; Thomas Cox, *Blacks in Topeka, Kansas, 1865-1915: A Social History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 82-83.

<sup>36</sup>Kansas State Decennial Census Manuscripts for Shawnee County, 1865. Microfilm Division, KSHS Archives; Cox, 5.

<sup>37</sup>Cox, 82.

<sup>38</sup>Miner, 96.

<sup>39</sup>Along with their duties, a number of ministers served as editors or were associated with Kansas' black newspapers, including the Rev. B. F. Watson and the Rev. J. R. Ransom of the A. M. E. Conference of Kansas and Baptist clergy the Rev. W. L. Grant and the Rev. S. W. Beasley.

<sup>40</sup>William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas, "Leavenworth County, Part 11"* [book online], Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883, accessed 22 October 2000, available from <http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/kancoll/books/cutler/leavenworth/leavenworth-co-p1.html>; Internet.

<sup>41</sup>Cox, 31.

<sup>42</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 22 February 1890; J. Louis Ransom, "History of Kansas Conference," Souvenir Program of 68th Session of the Kansas Annual Conference of the African American Episcopal Church, St. John A. M. E. Church, Topeka, Kansas, 1943 (KSHS, K 287.8, pamphlet v).

<sup>43</sup>Susan D. Greenbaum, *The Afro-American Community in Kansas City, Kansas: A History* (City of Kansas City, Kansas, 1982), 39.

<sup>44</sup>August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1963), 12-13.

<sup>45</sup>*National Reflector*, 10 October 1896.

<sup>46</sup>Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 70.

<sup>47</sup>Greenbaum, 89.

<sup>48</sup>Dennis Lawrence, "The Impact of Local, State and Federal Decisions on the Segregation and Subsequent Integration of Sumner High School In Kansas, City, Kansas" (Unpublished diss., University of Kansas, 1997), 41, 73.

<sup>49</sup>Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 66; Indianapolis Freeman, 4 May 1889; Sondra Van Meeter, "Black Resistance to Segregation in the Wichita Public Schools, 1870-1912," *The Midwest Quarterly* 10, No. 1 (Autumn 1978): 64-77.

<sup>50</sup>1880 census data, "Historical U.S. Census Data Browser."

<sup>51</sup>These counties accounted for nearly 50 percent of the black population of Kansas, according to the 1890 census, "Historical U.S. Census Data Browser."

<sup>52</sup>Nudie E. Williams, "Black Newspapers and the Exodusters" (Unpublished diss., Oklahoma State University, 1977), 21.

<sup>53</sup>"Black Newspapers," Kansas State Historical Society, accessed 30 September, 2000, available from <http://www.kshs.org/library/blcknspr.htm>; Internet.

<sup>54</sup>See biographical sketch of Waller in Penn, 188-194.

<sup>55</sup>Wm. H. Chafe, "The Negro and Populism: A Kansas Case Study," *Journal of Southern History* 34 (August, 1968): 402-419.

<sup>56</sup>Indianapolis Freeman, 10 May 1890.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 10 May 1890.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 17 December 1892.

<sup>59</sup>In February 1891, Waller accepted an appointment as U.S. consul to Madagascar. In 1894, following Grover Cleveland's election as president, Waller had to step down. He stayed on in Madagascar, with the intentions of carrying out a land development project. Several months later he was arrested and imprisoned, charged with being a spy. After eighteen months the French government released Waller, and he returned to Kansas (See Woods, *Black Odyssey*).

<sup>60</sup>*American Citizen*, 2 August 1889. The *Citizen* staff included McGuinn, George A. Dudley and Henry F. Johnson as business managers, and associate editor W. J. Johnson, a teacher in Topeka.

<sup>61</sup>See Chafe, 402-419. Other political independents included newspapermen Fred L. Jeltz, editor of *Kansas State Ledger* in Topeka, and W. A. Bettis of the *Kansas Headlight* in Wichita, who turned for a time to the Populist Party.

<sup>62</sup>*American Citizen*, 26 July 1889.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 16 August 1889.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 30 August 1889.

<sup>65</sup>*Indianapolis Freeman*, 27 April 1890.

<sup>66</sup>Randall B. Woods, C.H.J. Taylor and the Movement for Black Political Independence, 1882, 1896," *Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 122-135.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup>For example, see "Our Duty," *American Citizen*, 8 July 1892, in which Taylor articulates his views on assimilation and political independence. Taylor, whose initials C. H. J. usually preceded his surname, adopted "Old Alphabet" as his byline.

<sup>69</sup>*American Citizen*, 11 March 1892. Mrs. Frances J. Jackson and Mrs. Mary E. Nero, both of Kansas City, Missouri, had contemplated starting a weekly newspaper, but they decided instead to join the *Citizen*'s staff. The *Citizen* could then boast of coverage for "twin cities of the Kaw" (*American Citizen*, 12 June 1891, 26 June 1891).

<sup>70</sup>*American Citizen*, 12 June 1891; 28 August 1891.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 28 August 1891.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 5 January 1894.

<sup>73</sup>Dudley was the only person to remain continuously on the *Citizen* staff from 1888 to 1907.

<sup>74</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 18 August 1888. The founding editors were N. Clark Smith and "Chuck" Chestina (*Atchison Blade*, 3 December 1892).

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 25 August 1888.

<sup>76</sup>Rashey B. Moten, "The Negro Press of Kansas" (Unpublished master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1938), 33.

<sup>77</sup>Editor E. E. Cooper of the Indianapolis *Freeman* defended the use of readyprint because much of the original copy in some black newspapers was done poorly (*Indianapolis Freeman* 15 June 1889); Eugene C. Harter, *Boilerplating America: The Hidden Newspaper* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 24-26.

<sup>78</sup>Harter, 22, 33-34. In one issue, the *Parsons Weekly Blade* wrote: "We are compelled to use old plate matter this week because our plates did not arrive. The House with which we deal, burned last week and they had not made arrangements up to date" (*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 23 March 1895).

<sup>79</sup>Penn, 314.

<sup>80</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 13 June 1891; Frank Lincoln Mather, ed., *Who's Who of the Colored Race: A General Biographical Dictionary of Men and Women of African Descent* (Chicago: Half-Century Anniversary of Negro Freedom in U.S., 1915; Reprint, Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit, 1976), 260.

<sup>81</sup>Penn, 312-314.

<sup>82</sup>"Will Study Law," *Leavenworth Advocate*, 21 September 1889; *Leavenworth Advocate*, 13 June 1891; *National Reflector*, 9 October 1897.

<sup>83</sup>*National Reflector*, 9 October 1897.

<sup>84</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 4 May 1889.

<sup>85</sup>*Woods, Black Odyssey*, 71-72.

<sup>86</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 23 July 1892.

<sup>87</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 26 April 1890; 12 July 1890.

<sup>88</sup>The paper noted an increase in subscriptions after Bruce joined the staff. See "Our Subscription List," *Leavenworth Advocate*, 5 April 1890.

<sup>89</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 8 February 1890.

<sup>90</sup>"Auditor of State," *Topeka Daily Capitol*, 26 October 1892.

<sup>91</sup>Chuck Marsh, "First Black Graduate was Acclaimed Tutor," *Kansas Alumni Magazine* 83, no. 5 (February 1985): 11. This article commemorated a hundred years since Bruce had graduated from the University of Kansas.

<sup>92</sup>Bruce remained at Sumner School until he retired in 1939, after working as principal there for 54 years.

<sup>93</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 22 November 1890; Henry Clay Bruce, *The New Man: Twenty-nine Years a Slave, Twenty-nine Years a Free Man: Recollections of H. C. Bruce*, originally published in 1895, introduction by Willard B. Gatewood Jr., ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), xi-xii, 112-113. H. C. Bruce and his fiancée reached Leavenworth on March 31, 1864, and were married the following day by the minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The Bruces found jobs and eventually purchased a small house in Leavenworth before moving to Atchison in 1870 and opening a store there. H. C. Bruce left Kansas in the early 1880s and settled in Washington, D.C., where he served as Register of Treasury and later as an examiner in the Pension Office in the Interior Department, positions secured through the

influence of his younger brother, Blanche Kelso Bruce, former U.S. senator of Mississippi.

<sup>94</sup>Marie Deacon, "Kansas as the 'Promised Land': The View of the Black Press, 1890-1900" (Unpublished master's thesis, University of Arkansas, 1972), 24; Chafe, 402-419.

<sup>95</sup>Martin E. Dann, ed., *The Black Press, 1872-1890: The Quest for National Identity* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 121.

<sup>96</sup>Chafe, 402-419.

<sup>97</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 16 March 1889; *Leavenworth Herald*, 1 September 1894; *National Reflector*, 20 February 1897.

<sup>98</sup>"A CALL FOR A STATE CONVENTION OF LEADING COLORED MEN," *Leavenworth Advocate*, 19 July 1890; "The Candidacy of Hon. J. L. Waller," *Leavenworth Advocate*, 8 August 1890. Despite their efforts to promote the Waller nomination, delegates at the Republican state convention in Topeka chose a white farmer, C. M. Hovey, as candidate for state auditor. (*Leavenworth Advocate*, 6 September 1890; Woods, 106).

<sup>99</sup>*Historic Times of Lawrence, Kansas*, 24 October 1891.

<sup>100</sup>*Topeka Call*, 10 July 1892; *Topeka Daily Capital*, 26 October 1892.

<sup>101</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 17 February 1894.

<sup>102</sup>Tenth Census, "Statistics of Population in the United States," Department of Interior, Census Office (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883), 418. Among the KSHS holdings of extant black newspapers, at least twenty were published in Topeka during the late-nineteenth century. In 1893, as many as six newspapers were published concurrently in the city and distributed to area readers: the *Baptist Headlight*, *Colored Citizen*, *Kansas State Ledger*, *Daily Ledger*, *Topeka Call*, and *Evening Call*. Several of these newspapers, though, survived only a couple of months.

<sup>103</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 5 May 1894.

<sup>104</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 22 July 1892.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, 22 July 1892.

<sup>106</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 22 July 1892. Several months later, Jeltz thanked the railroad companies that had provided funds to start his paper (*Kansas State Ledger*, 18 November 1892).

<sup>107</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 2 February 1894. Jeltz completed his preparatory education in Jackson. He received training in the Normal Department of Tougaloo University, graduating in 1877 (*Kansas State Ledger*, 20 October 1893; "Tougaloo College, History of The College" [online], accessed 24 September 2000, available from [www.tougaloo.edu/history.html](http://www.tougaloo.edu/history.html); Internet).

<sup>108</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 20 January 1893; *Topeka Journal*, 9 March 1937. Jeltz made his first trip to Kansas in the 1870s, but returned to Mississippi, where he taught school for twelve years before finally returning to Kansas in 1889.

<sup>109</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 20 October 1893.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, 9 December 1892.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, 24 March 1893.

<sup>112</sup>Compared to his competitors, Jeltz's annual subscription price matched the *Atchison Blade's*, but the *Ledger* undersold the price of the *American Citizen*, (\$1.50) and the *Parsons Weekly Blade* (\$1.25) in 1892. In 1898, he was stilling selling the paper for \$1 a year, but by 1904 he had raised the price to \$2.

<sup>113</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 18 November 1892; 12 May 1893.

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, 17 March 1893. Jeltz's business know-how would keep the *Ledger* publishing for nearly fourteen years.

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*, 12 May 1893.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 26 May 1893.

<sup>117</sup>Moten, 117. The *Daily State Ledger* made its appearance for a week, June 13-June 20, 1893. Jeltz's Topeka colleague William Pope published the *Evening Call* from June 13-July 8, 1893, and the *Daily American Citizen* ran from November 11, 1897-February 7, 1900. The Topeka *Daily Plaindealer* ran less than a week, August 12-16, 1907.

<sup>118</sup>1880 census data, "Historical U.S. Census Data Browser." The first black-run newspaper, the *Colored Citizen*, started in Fort Scott in 1878 before it was moved to Topeka, less than six months later.

<sup>119</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 3 April 1897; Athearn, 186, 189.

<sup>120</sup>Athearn, 186.

<sup>121</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 3 April 1897; Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas, Labette County, Part 4*," accessed 22 October 2000, available from <http://www.ukans.edu/carrrie/kancoll/books/cutler/labette/labette-co-p4.html>; Internet.

<sup>122</sup>Arnold Cooper, "Protection to All, Discrimination to None," *Kansas History* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 58-71.

<sup>123</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 14 January 1893; 18 March 1893; 22 April 1893.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 5 May 1894; 7 August 1897.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 24 September 1892.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 30 September 1893.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 23 February 1893; 24 August 1895.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., 30 September 1893.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., 6 January 1894.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., 24 August 1895; "The Blade," Fifth

Anniversary Number, 31 July 1897 (KSHS, K 326, Pam. v., no. 11).

<sup>131</sup>Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 5 October 1895.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., 5 October 1895; "The *Blade*," 31 July 1897. J. Monroe Dorsey returned to Omaha in 1899 after his wife died. Consequently, Charles A. Morris took over as publisher, and J. L. Craw became editor. S. O. Clayton, who had returned to the *Blade* in November 1897, continued on as its associate editor.

<sup>133</sup>American *Citizen*, 4 January 1895.

<sup>134</sup>Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 19 October 1895.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 19 October 1895.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 23 November 1895.

<sup>137</sup>"The *Blade*," 31 July 1897.

<sup>138</sup>1890 census data, "Historical U.S. Census Data Browser."

<sup>139</sup>At least six newspapers published in Wichita between 1887 and 1895, but all expired within a year of their founding.

<sup>140</sup>*The People's Friend*, 21 September 1894. The *Conservator* was edited by Ferdinand Barnett, a lawyer and civil rights activist, who married anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells in June 1895.

<sup>141</sup>Jeltz moved to Wichita, where he published *The People's Friend* in Wichita for four months in 1894. He later returned to Topeka, where he briefly revived the paper in 1896.

<sup>142</sup>*National Reflector*, 8 December 1895.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., 8 December 1895. The use of "(?)" was often used as an editorial comment about particular words and phrases.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., 2 January 1897.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., 2 January 1897.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 5 June 1897.

<sup>147</sup>*Wichita Globe*, 17 February 1887. The *Globe* ran a notice for Bettis & Co. in its first issue: "The GLOBE takes pleasure in saying that the firm of Bettis & Co. have the finest fitted up office of its kind in the state. These young gentlemen have a large acquaintance here, and our people have a great deal of real estate. They will do you well. Give them a call." Several weeks later, Bettis ran an ad for W. A. Bettis & Co., with a property list. Editor D. L. Robinson wrote: "Bettis and Jones are making some good [real estate] sales. They are both young and energetic, careful businessmen, and if you have any property to sell place it in their hands and they will dispose of it in a short time" (*Wichita Globe*, 3 March 1887). For historical context of the real estate boom of the 1880s, see H. Craig Miner, *Wichita: The Magic City* (Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum Association, 1988), 46-71.

<sup>148</sup>"Sedgwick County Marriage Affidavit Index," May 1870 to May 1920 [database online], Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society, Wichita, Kansas; accessed 30 September 2000, available from <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/mhgs/marriage.htm>; Internet. William A. Bettis married Maggie E. Jones on 20 March 1889.

<sup>149</sup>Samuel Wilson Jones was born to Daniel and Amanda Jones in Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1867. He moved with his family to Wichita in 1874, where he became the first black to attend the city's public schools.

<sup>150</sup>*Wichita Globe*, 1 April 1887; 22 April 1887.

<sup>151</sup>The *National Baptist World* was a consolidation of two papers, the *Baptist Headlight*, previously published in Topeka, and the *Afro-American Baptist* (*The People's Friend*, 10 August 1894; 24 August 1894; *National Baptist World*, 31 August 1894).

<sup>152</sup>State Board of Agriculture Census, Sedgwick County, 1895; Miner, 17, 96.

<sup>153</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 31 August 1889; Kansas

*Headlight*, 14 August 1894. While no extant copies of the *Standard* or the *Tribune* have been found, two issues of the Kansas *Headlight* survived.

<sup>154</sup>*National Reflector*, 15 August 1896; 10 April 1897; 24 July 1897; *The People's Friend*, 13 July 1894. In 1864, Will Bettis was born to Johnson and Melvina Bettis in Texas. The family migrated to Kansas in the 1870s. Will spent part of his early years in Leavenworth, where his father worked as a fireman (Microfilm of 1880 U.S. Census, Leavenworth City, First Ward, 34).

<sup>155</sup>*National Reflector*, 9 April 1898.

<sup>156</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 27 January 1893.

### CHAPTER 3 FORGING TIES AMONG COMMUNITIES

The Kansas black press took root primarily in northeastern communities of Leavenworth, Topeka, and Lawrence in the late 1870s, after editors, including ministers, businessmen, and attorneys, managed to pull together needed funds and means to publish the newspapers.<sup>1</sup> By the late 1880s and 1890s, a network of newspapers had expanded to southeast and southwest communities. Not only were papers distributed in towns where they were printed, but editors and general agents also sought to extend the circulation, often by making visits to enlist subscribers in outlying towns and cities.

On one such junket, Topeka editor F. L. Jeltz and agent Nat Langston of Lawrence traveled to Emporia, McPherson, Council Grove, and the Indian and Oklahoma territories "to arrange for the appearance of the [Kansas State] *Ledger* throughout the entire southwest, and Territories."<sup>2</sup> A week later an exuberant Jeltz returned to Topeka from his excursion to the southwest. The trip had netted more than 100 new subscribers for the *Ledger*.<sup>3</sup>

These promotional trips, combined with other factors, enabled newspapers to maintain contact among various communities throughout the state. Newspaper readers across Kansas became privy to news about events and social happenings throughout the northeast, southeast, and southwest regions of the state and beyond. For some African Americans, contact with communities having larger concentrations of African Americans helped counter isolationism, particularly for those who lived in southwestern counties, which had only 3 percent of the state's black population in 1880.<sup>4</sup> For many first- and second-generation Kansans, connections with other blacks also mitigated the separation from familial roots, which for many were in the South.<sup>5</sup> In addition, African Americans throughout the state, as marginalized, second-class citizens, faced similar racial hostilities, such as employment and housing discrimination and police brutality.<sup>6</sup> Through the newspapers, readers became aware of racist situations beyond their own community, and black leaders could mobilize efforts to protest injustices and advocate for change.

This chapter discusses means through which black newspapers in the last decades of the nineteenth century linked readers in different areas of Kansas, thus establishing and maintaining ties that extended well beyond local towns and cities. Focusing on those who combined efforts to make the newspapers viable--editors, reporters,

correspondents, and agents--revealed a black press expanding westward that fostered a nexus of communities and promoted a collective identity among African Americans in Kansas. This extended community contributed to a sense of belonging that countered pervasive distinctions most African Americans faced in the parallel societies of Kansas in the late-nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

#### Community Newspapers

In the late-nineteenth century, black citizens in most Kansas towns were not allowed to participate in white churches, schools, and organizations. Consequently, they developed similar institutions within their own communities. While black newspapers assumed voices of advocacy for black citizens, the newspapers also worked in conjunction with black schools, churches, and associations to weave the social fabric of black communities.

Not only did academic, religious, and social events and topics generate news for the newspapers, but the institutions, in fact, also were often integral to a paper's survival.<sup>8</sup> Parsons *Weekly Blade* contributing correspondent Dennis Thompson underscored that reality, following the 1895 demise of yet another black newspaper, the *Future State* of Kansas City, Missouri. Thompson wrote:

The only channel through which the Negro newspaper can be put on a substantial paying basis, will be through the united efforts of the school room, the pulpit and the secret organization[s] of the race; not in any specified community, but through a co-operative effort of the entire Negro race throughout the United States.<sup>9</sup>

In the *Weekly Blade*, Thompson exhorted black educators to lay a solid foundation for their communities by teaching young people to value black newspapers. Newspapers were a practical source of reading material for students, but Thompson urged readers to consider the press's broader tasks of building unity and racial pride for the black community. As black-owned businesses, newspapers targeted a black market, whose patronage was needed for the newspapers to succeed financially. Thompson wrote:

Whenever this idea is conceived in the minds of the school children, it is implanted deeper and deeper in their minds as they get older, and when they reach maturity, they are then prepared to impart this important spark of [sic] unto the younger generation.<sup>10</sup>

The importance of church support for newspapers, Thompson emphasized, could not be overlooked. The black church was well established as a separate institution during the late-nineteenth century. Churches, including Baptist, African Methodist Episcopalian, and Colored Methodist Episcopalian denominations, were the "logical center for community life."<sup>11</sup> People not only assembled at churches for worship and religious teaching, but they also gathered there for political meetings, musical concerts, and community barbecues.<sup>12</sup>

Church groups based on religious denominations, such as the Baptists, organized according to geographic parameters. For example, state meetings of the Central Baptist Sunday School convention brought members together

from churches in Wichita, Parsons, Salina, and Emporia.<sup>13</sup> Joint sessions that included Executive Boards of the Central, Southeastern, Northwestern, and Northeastern Associations met annually to conduct denominational business.<sup>14</sup>

These regional associations reinforced the newspapers' roles in linking communities. Several denominational groups appointed particular newspapers as the authorized publications for the churches. Both the Kansas Northwestern Missionary Baptist Association and Central Baptist Association designated the *National Reflector* of Wichita as their organ; one task was to publish the minutes of the meetings.<sup>15</sup> Several years earlier, the Northeastern Baptist Convention and Association had adopted the Parsons *Weekly Blade* as their official recorder. "We are just proud and will say the work given this company will be expediently and neatly done," the *Blade* promised.<sup>16</sup>

Clergy endorsements of a newspaper could boost its number of subscribers. After correspondent J. J. Thomas spoke to several churches in Louisville, Kentucky, on behalf of the *American Citizen*, the "pastors and Sunday school superintendents encouraged their respective congregations to consider the propriety of subscribing."<sup>17</sup> Thomas reported that several members decided to sign up for the paper, and Miss Mary B. White agreed to act as an agent for the *Citizen* in Louisville. In Wichita, the Rev. John

Price of New Hope Baptist Church implored his congregation to subscribe to the *People's Friend*. The paper's editor thanked the pastor for his support, adding: "Let other divines follow."<sup>18</sup>

By contrast, a pastor could also have a negative effect on a newspaper's circulation. According to correspondent Thompson, some churches inadvertently dissuaded newspaper readership by making community announcements from the pulpit.<sup>19</sup> This traditional practice tended to undercut motivations for reading newspapers, which had a far greater potential for circulating information than relying on verbal reports in churches.

Previously, the *Blade* had written a directive to churches about this concern, noting that reading notices from the pulpit "leads the people to expect information from no other source."<sup>20</sup> Newspapers could better convey news, "not only in your own city and state, but to thousands of homes beyond the borders of your own state," Thompson contended.<sup>21</sup> Through a concerted effort by leaders in churches to abandon the practice of disseminating news from the pulpit, Thompson believed people would be "driven to patronize and support race papers."<sup>22</sup>

Several black publishing companies, in fact, provided support for religious publications. In Topeka, the *Kansas State Ledger* agreed to print the *Baptist Headlight*, established in September 1893 and edited by the Rev. P. D. Skinner of Shiloh Baptist Church.<sup>23</sup> About a year later, the

paper consolidated with the *Afro-American Baptist* to become the *National Baptist World*. The paper relocated from Topeka to Wichita, with S. W. Jones as editor and publisher and several ministers, including Skinner, working as associate editors.<sup>24</sup>

After about four months, Baptist church leaders determined the paper was headed toward failure.<sup>25</sup> At a Kansas State Executive Board meeting, members determined that the *Parsons Weekly Blade* should publish the paper.<sup>26</sup> In April 1895, the "well-established" Blade Publishing Company took over, running the publication as the *Baptist Globe* and distributing issues as part of the *Parsons* paper.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to churches, newspapers also needed the support of the community's secret organizations. Chapters of fraternal organizations, such as Good Templars, Knights of Pythias, Masons, and Odd Fellows, were active in rural and urban areas with concentrated black populations throughout Kansas.<sup>28</sup> Among the motivations in joining secret societies were death benefit policies that provided for widows and children of members.<sup>29</sup> Thompson prodded such organizations to assist race journals. He suggested that local chapters and affiliates lend their support to the black press by adopting credible newspapers as their official organs rather than maintaining their own sheets. Newspapers benefit from the endorsements and patronage, and the groups would not need to spend money on producing their own publications. One group, the Knights of Pythias,

designated the Parsons *Weekly Blade* as its public reporter, and the paper urged lodges to send in their communications.<sup>30</sup>

Benefits sponsored to solicit donations and raise community support for the newspapers illustrate the interplay between the press and other social institutions in the community.<sup>31</sup> For some papers, these annual gatherings became a high point of the community's social calendar. "The State Ledger banquet will be first-class in every particular," promised editor F. L. Jeltz.<sup>32</sup> He assured readers that "noisy ruffians, bums and loafers" were unwelcome, and that "Chief Donovan will send over the hoodlum wagon and capture them and make them prisoner" if they decided to make an appearance.<sup>33</sup>

These benefits, held on behalf of the newspapers, brought together religious and political leaders, educators, businessmen, and journalists. Toastmasters for one Kansas State *Ledger* banquet included teacher Tilford Davis Jr. of Kansas City and Wamego businessman James Beck.<sup>34</sup> At a similar event held in honor of the *Atchison Blade*, attorney W. B. Townsend and Prof. H. M. G. Spencer, who taught in Atchison, delivered keynote addresses.<sup>35</sup>

To commemorate the beginning of its fourth year, the *American Citizen* publicized a gathering billed as "The Grandest Affair Of The Season," organized by the Columbian Literary Society of Kansas City.<sup>36</sup> The literary society, which had designated the *Citizen* its "official organ,"<sup>37</sup>

made arrangements for the facilities, speakers, and music. The speeches slated on the program encompassed community establishments, including "Colored Institutions and Our Relations to Them," "The Teacher and the Press--Their Relation," and "The Aim of Negro Editors and Journalists." The *Citizen* urged area pastors to "boom this meeting to their congregations and insist on their attendance" and promised the clergy honored seats on the rostrum if they attended the meeting.<sup>38</sup> The following week, the *Citizen* noted that at least 800 local and out-of-town guests had attended the event, even though "the night was exceedingly cold and windy."<sup>39</sup>

Newspapers did not operate autonomously as a unifying force for black communities in Kansas, but editors had multiple opportunities to draw communities together. According to F. L. Jeltz, as many as ten people read each distributed copy of the *Ledger*.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, because of the potential scope of newspaper circulation when delivered to numerous rural and urban areas, the press played an important role in building bonds among communities.

The sections that follow examine how individuals associated with the newspapers--editors, contributors, correspondents, and agents--combined efforts to link black readers among the three regions of Kansas, thus establishing and maintaining ties among newspaper readers that extended well beyond local communities.

Editors as Community Spokesmen

Black newspapers in Kansas usually centered around charismatic editors, similar to many of the early black newspapers published prior to the 1870s.<sup>41</sup> These journalists were among the black elite and rising black middle class in Kansas communities. Social status evidenced itself by their occupations, associations, and community leadership.

Working as attorneys, barbers, teachers, letter carriers, law enforcement officers, and ministers, most editors added the responsibility of running the newspaper to their steady employment.<sup>42</sup> Entrepreneur W. A. Bettis maintained his Wichita barbershop, advertised in the *National Reflector*, while he also focused his journalistic energies on producing several newspapers.<sup>43</sup> A growing number, though, became entrepreneurial printers. J. Monroe Dorsey, publisher and editor of the *Parsons Weekly Blade*, State Ledger editor Fred L. Jeltz, who previously taught school, and William M. Pope of the *Topeka Call* ran print shops, where they put out their newspapers.<sup>44</sup>

The editors' social positions were evidenced not only by occupations, but also by involvement in local literary societies, fraternal organizations, and churches. W. B. Townsend and B. K. Bruce Jr. were active members of the Leavenworth's Platonian Literary Club, where the activities for members included German lessons,<sup>45</sup> while J. Hume Childers of Topeka, founder of the *Times-Observer*, was one of the originators of the Interstate Literary Association

in 1892.<sup>46</sup> The literary association, active until the turn of the century, embraced both middle class and elite members from several literary clubs in Kansas and Missouri.<sup>47</sup> Childers also provided leadership for a Scottish Rite Masonry lodge.<sup>48</sup> At the Colored Methodist Episcopalian convention for teachers and clergy, held in Leavenworth, Townsend and Bruce were listed as speakers on the program.<sup>49</sup>

Though the vast majority of African Americans were a lower socio-economic class than the editors, the journalists still took on a role as community spokesmen, acting as interpreters of events and issues through the newspapers.<sup>50</sup> W. B. Townsend of the Leavenworth Advocate earned a reputation of being a persistent activist against injustice.<sup>51</sup> Upon hearing repeated reports of inequities, particularly in the South, he bitterly denounced the outrages against blacks. Following a trip to Mississippi to visit his estranged father, Townsend wrote:

We do not hesitate to say that during our short stay in the South, that we saw and heard more from the lips of our down trodden and helpless people, concerning the impositions, the wrongs, trials and vicissitudes heaped upon them by the whites than the people of the North are willing to believe.<sup>52</sup>

In response to the lynching of African Americans, the editors of the *National Reflector* initiated the formation of a statewide anti-lynching league by calling on the support of other black leaders in the state.<sup>53</sup>

As community leaders, many of the editors were well known beyond their cities. Polished orators C. H. J. Taylor

of the *American Citizen* in Kansas City and F. L. Jeltz of Topeka's *Kansas State Ledger* were among those newspapermen invited as keynote speakers at events in other towns and cities in Kansas, as well as in other neighboring states.<sup>54</sup> Others, on occasion, performed in vocal and musical concerts in their local and outlying communities. Reports noted that S. O. Clayton of the *Parsons Weekly Blade* sang with a rich bass voice at the city's A. M. E. church, while audience members in Wichita appreciated musical selections from journalist S. W. Jones' sliding trombone.<sup>55</sup>

Relationships among the editors themselves became a vital way the newspapers formed connections with communities throughout Kansas. On behalf of their papers, editors and staff members made frequent trips to towns and cities in Kansas. When editors visited other cities in the state, often one of the first places they stopped was the newspaper office, which usually ran notices of those visits. J. Monroe Dorsey, for example, frequently visited Wichita, where his wife's family lived. While in the city for a political convention, he stopped to visit the *National Reflector* editor, as did W. D. Driver, editor of the *Coffeyville Blackman*.<sup>56</sup>

Relationships among the editors, however, were not always collegial. Invariably, conflicts developed between journalists, evidenced by sometimes contentious and wrangling dialogues printed in the newspapers. Factions developed over political loyalties, such as when the

Leavenworth Advocate criticized the politically independent "coterie of fellows who are managing the [American] 'Citizen,'" who refused to endorse Republican John L. Waller as minister to Haiti in 1889.<sup>57</sup>

On occasion, attacks became personal. In 1894, the Parsons *Weekly Blade* observed that the "Kansas Blackman, of Topeka, seems to be in a kind of a hornets nest with the *Ledger* and the *Call*, both buzzing and stinging with all fury."<sup>58</sup> Long-time friends *Ledger* editor Fred Jeltz and Will Pope of the *Call*, who at one time had attempted unsuccessfully to put out a daily paper, accused Will Driver of being a presumptuous outsider. "We will not stand it--we will not allow all kinds of disreputable scamps to come into our city, work our people, and beg subscriptions," Jeltz wrote in the *Ledger*. "We do not endorse foreign movements; neither do we wish to be associated with ex-convicts, nor jail birds, that have fortunately escaped."<sup>59</sup>

Jeltz's tirade, which continued in the *Ledger* for several weeks, came after Driver attended a local political meeting and interjected his opinion regarding a potential black candidate for state auditor. At the meeting, Will Pope reportedly rebuked Driver's "foreign dictation," a reference to the *Blackman* editor's recent move to Topeka, after working on papers in Indianapolis for several years.<sup>60</sup> Before moving to Indianapolis, Driver had, in fact, served time in jail after being convicted of a felony, but

Governor Lyman Underwood Humphrey, a Republican, had pardoned Driver when it became obvious he had been wrongly convicted of the crime.<sup>61</sup>

The *American Citizen* came to Driver's defense and condemned "this indecent and unmanly warfare upon an unfortunate, and we believe innocent man." The paper urged "the fair minded people of Topeka . . . [to] give Driver a fair show; if he proves true applaud him, if not then and only then condemnation."<sup>62</sup> Another journalistic colleague, J. Monroe Dorsey of the *Parsons Weekly Blade*, exhorted all three men to reconcile. "Brethren, Brethren, how can you fight the enemy [of prejudice] with so much internal strife?" Dorsey questioned.<sup>63</sup>

At other times, clashes centered on issues, such as the disagreement between Townsend and the editor of *American Citizen* about whether schools should be mixed or separate. Townsend avidly supported mixed schools as a civil right of African Americans, while the *Citizen* viewed segregated schools as the only way black teachers would be employed. After a Leavenworth state representative introduced a civil rights bill, composed by Townsend, to the Kansas legislature, the *Citizen* chose not to support the proposed legislation, even though "it appears upon its face to be a very commendable measure."<sup>64</sup> The *Citizen* suspected that because of Townsend's role, the bill was some kind of underlying attack against separate schools and black teachers. The paper cautioned its readers: "[I]t is

well known that it is very seldom any good things come out of Leavenworth."<sup>65</sup>

On the issue of lynching, the Leavenworth *Herald*'s B. K. Bruce Jr. and *National Reflector* editors S. W. Jones and W. A. Bettis exchanged heated words over appropriate responses toward pervasive mob violence against African Americans. While such incidents happened repeatedly in the South, nonetheless, at least sixteen men were lynched in Kansas between 1889 and 1899, the majority of whom were black.<sup>66</sup> The Wichita editors endorsed agitation and legislation against lynching, while Bruce believed such efforts were futile and energy was better spent in urging blacks to follow the law and "the path of right-doing."<sup>67</sup> For several weeks, the editors countered each other's charges in the papers. Finally, in the midst of the ongoing bickering, the *National Reflector* noted that Bruce, an "egotistical mudslinger," removed the Wichita paper from the Leavenworth *Herald*'s exchange list.<sup>68</sup>

Dissension, whether the result of differing ideologies, ambition, territoriality, or personality clashes, was a part of the dynamics among the journalists of the Kansas black press. Not unlike spats between siblings in a family, discord probably affected the effectiveness of the newspapers in building cohesiveness among readers. "We fight one another too much to succeed," the *National Reflector* conceded in the midst of its row with the Leavenworth *Herald*. "If we would combine the

energies we exert against each other and use them against our common foe, much would be accomplished that is now being daily lost to the whole race."<sup>69</sup>

Western Negro Press Association

Though the editors may have chosen journalism in part because it suited their independent personalities and working style, editing the newspaper had its share of challenges. "We know of no business, call or profession that is so galling as that of the Negro editor," lamented the *People's Messenger*, an exchange of the Parsons *Weekly Blade*. "Everybody knows his mistakes, and all see very plainly his errors. If the editor expresses an opinion, everybody is displeased; if he does not express an opinion, all say he is not the man."<sup>70</sup> Getting to know and meeting with colleagues gave Kansas's journalists much-needed support and facilitated camaraderie.

The Colored Press Association, known informally as the Afro-American Press Association, was organized for that very reason. The national organization, which began in the early 1880s and survived into the next century, convened yearly.<sup>71</sup> While most newspapers carried notices announcing the conventions, few Western editors attended because the meetings were held in cities such as Philadelphia, Atlanta, Georgia, and Richmond, Virginia. For the editors in Kansas, making their way to those distant locations meant paying their own travel expenses and spending valuable time away from their newspaper work.<sup>72</sup>

As a solution, contributing correspondent Dennis Thompson of Kansas City, Missouri, suggested that editors of black newspapers published in the Western states form an alliance. Several weeks earlier, the *Parsons Blade* had suggested that editors hold a regional meeting that could be an affiliate of the national press association.<sup>73</sup> According to Thompson, such a meeting would allow editors to brainstorm ways to make black newspapers more successful, provide opportunities to cultivate collegial relationships, establish a press service to share timely news with other newspapers, and settle minor tensions and conflicts among editors.<sup>74</sup>

In July 1896, the *American Citizen* of Kansas City, Kansas, ran a notice for editors from Kansas and Missouri to meet at a convention in Kansas City, Missouri.<sup>75</sup> While journalists from other states were invited to attend, only those from Kansas and Missouri would be seated at the convention as members.<sup>76</sup> On July 14, a group of journalists met to form the nucleus of the Western Negro Press Association. *Citizen* founder John L. Waller, who had resumed editorship of the paper, led a planning meeting at which the editors discussed topics "on the line of elevating the tone of the Negro press."<sup>77</sup> Those in attendance hoped to enlist cooperation from "the entire Negro press west of the Mississippi," their intention being to make publications more effective in molding opinions of readers and to widen the influence of the press by

increasing circulation.<sup>78</sup> They scheduled the first annual convention for September in Sedalia, Missouri, and editors from newspapers in the surrounding territories were invited to participate.<sup>79</sup>

About a year later, the Western Negro Press Association held its second annual meeting at the Third Baptist Church in Kansas City.<sup>80</sup> The Indianapolis Freeman praised Waller and his "colleagues of the Kaw [River] cities who rendered him valuable support" for organizing the meeting.<sup>81</sup> According to the Freeman, the association had drawn "newspapers from Washington, California, Oregon, Utah, Colorado, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma and Indian Territory [that] have established the machinery for a powerful instrument for race good in this united body."<sup>82</sup> At the meeting, the journalists examined the role of their newspapers, exchanged ideas on how to promote action on race matters, and received a challenge from the association president, Harry R. Graham of the St. Joe (Mo.) Mirror, to "march boldly forward in the discharge of your every duty . . . as you shall mould [sic] the public opinion and purpose among all classes . . . and of every section that we shall dwell together in a future not that distant, in an improved and happy condition."<sup>83</sup>

Not all Kansas editors chose to participate in the alliance. The Leavenworth Herald saw little reason for the association, though the paper promised to send a reporter

to cover the Kansas City meetings.<sup>84</sup> Noting the Leavenworth paper's criticism, the *Parsons Weekly Blade* wrote:

The Western Negro Press association meets in Kansas City on Monday the 23rd and despite the fact that Bruce says it won't amount to 'beans' all western editors will be there to see what it amounts to. We'll be with you brothers, if you are not yet members.<sup>85</sup>

Evidently, those associated with the organization assumed the *State Ledger* would participate and listed the paper's name in the program. Jeltz, though, had made no public announcement about joining. Following the convention, he conveyed his determination not to participate in the association. Conveying his disapproval, Jeltz wrote:

We did not authorize anyone associated with the Western Negro Press convention at Kansas City to the use of our name as we are not a member and were not present. That doesn't mean that we could not have been there if we were legally on the program. A large number of editors of the "small fry" papers were head pushers and their absence caused consternation, but as we did not belong to it, hence we were not present.<sup>86</sup>

Despite a lack of participation by the two Kansas papers, the meeting was deemed a success. The convention drew journalists from more than ten states to Kansas City, and they left inspired to continue their tasks.<sup>87</sup> The members voted to hold the third annual meeting the following year in Omaha.

Journalists of neighboring cities Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri, had provided much of the initial leadership for the regional association, but editors from southeast and southwest Kansas soon became active. Both

associate editor H. L. Dorsey of the Parsons *Weekly Blade* and S. W. Jones, editor of Wichita's *National Reflector*, attended the August 1897 convention. The members elected Dorsey as secretary for the following year, and three years later Jones was chosen secretary.<sup>88</sup>

#### Job Training and Employment

Even though editors were recognized as the prominent personality of the newspapers, their businesses were not one-person operations. In hopes of garnering black votes, political parties subsidized some newspapers.<sup>89</sup> Other papers and printing businesses got started with the financial support of black businessmen who became stockholders. T. G. Banks, treasurer for the *Globe Publishing Company* in Wichita, owned 160 acres of prime land, which enabled him to contribute to the initial monetary backing needed to operate the *Wichita Globe*. The editor noted Banks' involvement should convince readers "whether the GLOBE has come to stay or not."<sup>90</sup> Generally, stockholders, as owners of the newspapers, would hire an editor and business manager for the paper, while leaving the responsibilities for the day-to-day operations to the editor and staff.<sup>91</sup>

Because many of the newspapers relied heavily on subscriptions, they faced regular financial crises. Parsons *Weekly Blade* editor S. O. Clayton wrote, "Negro journals are the most useful and the poorest paid of any enterprise in which our people are engaged."<sup>92</sup> For some, non-paying subscribers meant the end of the newspapers; others managed

to find the needed resources to keep going. George A. Dudley, the business manager and part-owner of the *American Citizen*, steered the paper through several financial crises that threatened its suspension. Somehow, however, he found the needed funds, at times even using his own money, to keep the paper solvent.<sup>93</sup>

In the 1890s, the longer-running newspapers were part of a printing business. Like other black-owned businesses, the newspapers and printing plants provided jobs for young black men and women, who could not readily gain employment at white-owned businesses. The *Leavenworth Advocate* boasted of being "the only journal in the state owned by colored men, who have their own material and have colored boys employed as typesetters."<sup>94</sup> The *American Citizen* management viewed providing jobs for young people as part of its contribution toward benefiting the community and criticized those papers that opted to patronize print shops owned by whites:

We are trying to aid in the development of the race. We have seen persons educated at the case in our office. Each Friday those who visit our office may see an army of boys and girls at work. Now is it fair for persons of the race to undertake to stop this work by getting white people to print for them "make shift" papers?<sup>95</sup>

As their businesses became more sophisticated and editors recognized the potential of providing jobs and training for those in the community, other papers adopted similar practices. At the *Parsons Weekly Blade*, Isa

Montgomery and Fay French received on-the-job training as compositors. Both young women readily acquired typesetting skills and proved to be valuable employees.<sup>96</sup> Montgomery started working for the *Blade* after she graduated from Hobson Normal Institute in Parsons. Founded by Quaker Darius W. Bowles in 1882, the school offered preparatory and teaching courses for black students primarily from Kansas, Missouri, Texas, and the Indian Territory.<sup>97</sup> French, a high-school graduate, was the oldest daughter of J. W. French, a Parsons contractor who served as Labette County coroner for several years.<sup>98</sup> She continued working as a compositor at the *Blade* for several years. Aritha Dorsey, another Hobson Institute graduate and younger sister of editor Monroe Dorsey, worked with French at the *Blade* as a compositor before finding a teaching job in Osceola, Missouri, returning to the paper to supplement her income during the summer months.<sup>99</sup>

The *American Citizen* endorsed the work of two young men who gained their journalistic skills and experience at several Kansas newspapers and went on to eventually run their own papers. "[W. D. Driver] and Will Harris are the only all round newspaper men of the Negro race of our acquaintance," wrote the *Citizen*. "They can write the 'stuff,' set it up put in the forms, run it off and mail it out. These young men are worth many politicians."<sup>100</sup>

Driver had worked as foreman of the *American Citizen* before going to Indianapolis, where he held a similar

position at the *Freeman* and wrote occasionally for the *Indianapolis News*, a white newspaper, and contributed write-ups to the *Freeman*. In 1893, the *Freeman* sent him to Chicago, where he managed the *Freeman*'s bureau there and served as the official correspondent for the Columbian Exposition World's Fair.<sup>101</sup> While in Chicago, Driver also sent news of the city's social life to the *Citizen*.<sup>102</sup> By 1894, Driver was back in northeast Kansas, where he started a newspaper, the *Kansas Blackman*, in Topeka. He eventually moved to Coffeyville, in southeast Kansas. Many of his journalist colleagues welcomed his return.<sup>103</sup>

Soon after Driver left the *Citizen* to go to Indianapolis, Will Harris assumed the position of foreman of the composing room. Harris grew up in Leavenworth and got his start in journalism at the *Advocate*. At the *Advocate*, Harris benefited from the paper's policy of employing "promising young school boys" to set type.<sup>104</sup> There Harris learned the printing trade and eventually went to work at the *Citizen*, where he also wrote copy for the paper.

Harris left the *Citizen* for an eight-month stint as one of three founding partners of the *Atchison Blade*.<sup>105</sup> By 1894, Harris had worked for at least four newspapers. After B. K. Bruce purchased the *Atchison Blade* and moved the paper to Leavenworth, he invited Harris to join the *Leavenworth Herald* staff as manager.<sup>106</sup> Harris's

journalistic experience had come full circle, bringing him back to his hometown.

Northeast Kansas was not the only area to spawn well-rounded journalists. In Wichita, Samuel W. Jones had learned aspects of running the newspaper while being associated with the *Wichita Globe* in 1887. Editor D. L. Robinson assigned Jones to be general solicitor, in charge of collecting for subscriptions and selling advertisements. Later, Jones worked as a compositor and then assistant editor at the *Globe*.<sup>107</sup> He also worked for a time as print foreman for the *People's Friend*, another Wichita paper, before accepting the job as editor and publisher of the *National Baptist World* in 1894.<sup>108</sup>

On at least one occasion Marshall Murdock, stalwart city leader and longtime publisher of *The Wichita Eagle*, praised Jones for his character as he switched between roles as constable and journalist. Murdock wrote:

It is not often that a constable is imbued with a deep religious sentiment, but Sam is an exception. He can drop the editorial pen at any hour of the day, buckle on his six-shooter, give chase to a chicken thief, and return to write the glories of the Baptist faith without the least disturbance in the realm of his thought.<sup>109</sup>

Several years later Jones took over the *National Reflector*, a Wichita paper that made its 1895 debut with George Wesley White as editor.<sup>110</sup> The newspaper had gone through a series of editorial staff changes until Jones took over as publisher and editor in January 1897. Jones

remained at the Reflector until shortly before he joined the Twenty-third Regiment Kansas Volunteer Infantry in July 1898. The Twenty-third was the only regiment led by black officers during the Spanish-American War.<sup>111</sup>

Whether homegrown journalists such as Driver, Harris, and Jones wrote the newspaper copy or produced the papers, the mentoring they received from their peers enabled them to contribute to the interconnections among black communities of Kansas. They became well-known in black communities throughout Kansas because of their associations with numerous newspapers and journalists.

#### Regular Correspondents

Many readers of the Kansas black newspapers readily recognized the bylines of several correspondents. Among the more prominent writers were Fearless, Wellington, Ichabod, and I. McCorker. One paper, where their writings appeared regularly, claimed to have "the best corps of correspondents of the State."<sup>112</sup>

Topeka correspondent "Fearless," pen name for J. Hume Childers,<sup>113</sup> contributed weekly to the Leavenworth Advocate, the Leavenworth Herald, the American Citizen, the Historic Times of Lawrence, and the Atchison Blade.<sup>114</sup> He also sent "Specials to the [Indianapolis] Freeman" that covered pertinent issues and happenings in Kansas's capital city, such as the controversial issue of separate schools.<sup>115</sup>

In the Kansas papers, Fearless's writings ranged from reports of hard news, such as a suspicious fire at the Lane

school building in North Topeka, to background and political commentary on the rise of the Farmers' Alliance, to out-of-town visitors.<sup>116</sup> His columns attracted Topeka readers for the Leavenworth Advocate. The paper wrote:

People will no longer subscribe for and read a paper simply because it is published by a Negro. There must be some merit in the paper. The ADVOCATE is justly proud of its rapidly growing circulation in the capital city. Every family in this city should read our paper. . . . Less than a year ago our subscribers here could be numbered on the fingers but today the list is rapidly approaching the five hundred mark.<sup>117</sup>

Under his "Fearless" byline, Childers experienced recognition and success as a correspondent. He decided to try his hand at editing a paper. In August 1891, Childers assumed charge of the Leavenworth Advocate, moving the paper, christened the *Times-Observer*, to Topeka.<sup>118</sup> After sporadic publication, however, the paper expired the following year.<sup>119</sup>

A trio of correspondents, George "Wellington" Gross, Grant "Ichabod" Brown, and Will "I. McCorker" Harris, wrote regularly for a number of Kansas papers.<sup>120</sup> However, the journalists did not limit themselves as correspondents. All three young men also edited newspapers for a short time. Gross worked as city editor for the *Historic*, while Brown and Harris founded the *Atchison Blade*.

Lawrence correspondent Gross, a family man with two young children, had strong ties to his hometown, where he worked in the post office.<sup>121</sup> As "Wellington," he reported

news from the city and seemed to favor covering literary and musical events. Gross paid attention to detail, demonstrated by a descriptive account of the attire worn by the bride and groom at a wedding. "The bride looked charming in a beautiful white silk [dress], trimmed in Parisian lace. The groom wore the conventional black, with white kids gloves," Wellington noted in the Leavenworth Advocate.<sup>122</sup>

Some readers familiar with the Kansas papers recognized copy signed "Ichabod" as that written by Grant Brown, who scribed the news from Atchison and other towns where he lived.<sup>123</sup> Brown had attended the University of Kansas after graduating from high school in Atchison. Afterward he taught school in Atchison and Wathena before leaving for Washington D.C., where he entered Howard University to study medicine.<sup>124</sup> While writing for the Kansas papers, Brown emphasized education, and he frequently reported the accomplishments of black students in area high schools and the University of Kansas.<sup>125</sup> Described by the *Historic Times* as "unassuming and quiet,"<sup>126</sup> he was recognized also as "one of Atchison's brainiest young men and a brilliant future is predicted for him."<sup>127</sup>

As one of the most prolific writers, Will Harris also regularly submitted columns, signed "I. McCORKER," for many of the newspapers. In his column "Little Lines" in the *Leavenworth Herald*, Harris wrote short, witty observations

about community folks and everyday life. He often quipped about matrimony, referring to "marriage as one form of slavery," and gender stereotypes, as in, "If a man has no wife to worry him he has a sister in her stead."<sup>128</sup> Both white and black newspapers clipped his columns, including the Kansas City Star and the New York Age.<sup>129</sup> Despite Harris's apparent celebrity, the Citizen wrote: "[T]he beauty of it is he hasn't the swell-head."<sup>130</sup> When Harris left the Atchison *Blade* to join the staff of the *Future State* in Kansas City, Missouri, the *Blade* lamented that his departure had "left a big hole."<sup>131</sup>

Not only did these writers keep their readers informed, but newspaper audiences also must have appreciated the familiar writing styles and colorful expressions that characterized their columns. The most successful correspondents, advised one journalist in the *American Citizen*, chose subjects of "practical benefit to the reader . . . , about which you know something."<sup>132</sup> He further admonished:

[I]n your own orginal [sic] way, proceed to develop [the topic]. . . . Remember that space is valuable to the editor. With most correspondents it would be a good rule to cut down the communication about one half.<sup>133</sup>

Correspondents Fearless, Ichabod, Wellington, and I. McCorker, along with others, appeared to follow that advice. They joined the editors of the papers as vital

contributors to the newspaper network of Kansas in the late-nineteenth century.

#### Agents and Correspondents

The distribution of the papers to outlying communities also contributed to a group identity for African Americans in Kansas. Increased circulation of a newspaper raised hopes that more readers would become paid subscribers and more businesses would choose to advertise in the papers. Because most of the newspapers relied heavily on subscriptions for income, editors depended on agents to promote their papers, sign up new subscribers, and collect payments.

As an incentive, agents received a commission for subscription money they managed to collect. Readers were notified in the papers that agents would be calling, and subscribers were reminded repeatedly to pay up, in advance if possible. "Please have your 20c ready for them, as we need it and cannot give you a news-paper with-out it," urged the Leavenworth Advocate.<sup>134</sup> The short life span of many newspapers may have affected readers' willingness to pay before receipt of the newspaper. The Advocate promoted paying month to month, though readers were reminded they would save money if they paid for three or six months in advance.<sup>135</sup> New subscribers would often find their names in the paper the following week in the hopes that more would not only agree to subscribe to the newspaper, but also pay money owed. The Citizen, noting that S. S. Jones was a

regular subscriber to the paper, urged others to "go and do likewise."<sup>136</sup>

The papers usually had at least one general agent, assigned by the newspaper office, who made trips to outlying towns and promoted the newspaper, distributed sample issues, and settled accounts with other agents.<sup>137</sup> During the first months of operation, the *Parsons Weekly Blade* enlisted the aid of the Rev. J. R. Ransom as its traveling agent and collector.<sup>138</sup> Ransom was minister of Brown's Chapel, the town's African Methodist Episcopal church, organized in 1876.<sup>139</sup> He was respected and well liked, an asset when it came to promoting the paper and calling on subscribers to settle their accounts. The *Blade*, on occasion, ran the text of Ransom's Sunday sermon, which was of interest to black citizens in Parsons and A. M. E. congregations throughout the state.<sup>140</sup>

Agents not only solicited subscribers, but some also sold advertising. After the *American Citizen* moved to Kansas City from Topeka, the management relied on C. L. DeRandomie, a realtor who was well-acquainted with the business communities of Topeka and Kansas City, to secure "some good paying ads."<sup>141</sup> Advertisements from towns throughout the state appeared in the papers. Physicians A. F. Higgins of Emporia and H. E. Potter of Clifton ran display ads in Topeka's *State Ledger*.<sup>142</sup> In the *Atchison Blade*, Lawrence grocer Richard Burns advertised: "I CAN'T

GIVE THE EARTH, BUT I CAN GIVE BIG BARGAINS IN GROCERIES."<sup>143</sup>

On occasion, unreliable and dishonest agents were detrimental to the reputation of the newspapers, undermining subscribers' confidence. The business manager of the *American Citizen* evidently made a judgment error when he hired George L. Fouche, whose name had appeared on the masthead of the *Citizen* as general agent and correspondent. After six weeks, Dudley ran a notice that Fouche was no longer connected with the paper because he had misrepresented himself. Fouche now had no authority to collect money or do any business on behalf of the *Citizen*. Dudley warned readers that those who did him "any favors on the account of this paper will not be appreciated."<sup>144</sup>

Regular correspondents and agents from other towns and cities were vital contributors to the livelihood of the newspapers. In almost every issue of a paper, a notice ran similar to the following one from the *Wichita Globe*:  
"Wanted agents in every town in the State for the GLOBE. Apply to WICHITA GLOBE PUBLISHING CO., 323 N. Main St., Wichita, Kan."<sup>145</sup> The *Parsons Weekly Blade* also posted regular notices, urging responsible men, women, boys, and girls to become agents and correspondents, those "who will send in items [of] interesting news--not foolish or strife raising matter--items that will make the paper sell."<sup>146</sup> The editors wanted to make direct, face-to-face connections to readers throughout Kansas.<sup>147</sup>

When Mrs. C. R. Harvey agreed to act as both agent and correspondent for her community in Lawrence, the Parsons *Blade* touted its good fortune to attain the services of such a "live and energetic lady," whom the editor expected would do much good for the paper.<sup>148</sup> Mrs. Harvey relayed newsy items, which she signed as "YOUR CORRESPONDENT," including reports of "very cold weather" in Lawrence, a meeting at St. James A. M. E. church, where members "are preparing for an old folk's concert to take place soon," and the death of Lawrence resident "Miss Lulu Frazier, who died Sunday with consumption."<sup>149</sup>

The Parsons *Blade*'s Wichita correspondent, known only by initials L. A. C., sent in accounts of the social news. The writer included visitors to the city, marriage announcements, and programs rendered by the literary societies, such as the musical that included an instrumental number by Wichita journalist S. W. Jones on the slide trombone.<sup>150</sup> Reading news about black Wichitans on the sheets of the *Blade* proved to draw subscribers in southwestern Kansas.<sup>151</sup> In fact, after a year of operation, the *Blade* opened a branch office in Wichita with Henrietta Turner as manager. Familial links proved to be an asset for the newspapers. Turner, who had grown up in Parsons, had recently moved to Wichita, where her sister, Stella, lived.<sup>152</sup>

Like Turner, agents and correspondents in other towns often had some kind of tie to the newspaper and the location where it was published. J. W. Wood of Winfield, who earned his living as a hotel chef, was correspondent and collector for the *Parsons Blade* for more than three years. He had established ties with the *Parsons* community, where he stayed while he learned his trade as a professional cook and then worked for three years in the old Abbott hotel.<sup>153</sup> After moving westward for a time, he returned to southeastern Kansas, where he settled with his family in Winfield. While some of the correspondents were tardy when sending in their news items, the *Blade* commended Wood because his "Winfield items are always on time."<sup>154</sup> The *Blade* told its correspondents: ". . . [We] are always anxious to publish communications of interest sent to us, but there is one thing sure, and that is, that you must get your news to us on time."<sup>155</sup> Editors also urged correspondents to "take more care in their penmanship and thus give less cause for mistakes. We have not time to rewrite, please take care in their write-ups."<sup>156</sup>

The *American Citizen* also had an editorial correspondent, W. J. Johnson of Topeka, who signed his column as "Boaz."<sup>157</sup> Johnson, a principal in the Madison school in Topeka, was associated with the paper for an extended time, more than seven years. He regularly reported hard news stories, as well as the social news in the city. The chief compositor at the *Citizen*, Will "I. McCorker"

Harris, praised Johnson's writing, noting that his "grammatical construction compares equally with that of any writer I have ever 'set after.'"<sup>158</sup>

The newspapers welcomed correspondents from neighboring towns and those who lived outside the state. The *Parsons Blade* had recruited correspondents in nearby Oswego and Chetopa, other Labette County townships where blacks lived, and across the state line in Joplin, Missouri. The paper also enlisted correspondents as far away as Houston, Waco, and Galveston in Texas, where many of the older residents had originated before settling in Parsons.<sup>159</sup> Because of the city's ties to Texas, it was not surprising that the paper had several agents and correspondents in the Lone Star state. In Wichita, the *National Reflector* listed the names of its agents and correspondents, most being women, who regularly submitted their community news to the paper. The list of writers included those in towns near Wichita in Sedgwick County, towns and cities in northeast and southeast Kansas, as well as places as far away as San Francisco.<sup>160</sup>

The *Reflector's* San Francisco correspondent was Mrs. Naomi Anderson, who had moved to California after living in Wichita for more than a decade. The paper notified its readers that Anderson, a noted lecturer and writer for women's suffrage, planned to continue sending correspondence to the newspaper:

We have just received an interesting paper for publication from the pen of Mrs. Naomi Anderson, now living in Sacramento, Cal., and who is well known in Wichita and southwestern Kansas as an able and popular writer.<sup>161</sup>

Naomi Talbert Anderson, born in Michigan City, Indiana, March 1, 1843, moved to Kansas in 1884 from Ohio with her second husband Lewis, a banker.<sup>162</sup> In Wichita, Naomi Anderson became a community activist, helping found a home for orphaned black children who were not permitted to live in the orphanage that housed white children.<sup>163</sup>

In the newspapers, Anderson often used biblical analogies when writing about suffrage and other topics, such as the identity of African Americans. In one issue, she urged her readers to claim their birthright as Americans:

Thus far I have only used the term Ethiopian because its interpretation is black or burnt faces, and up to the time of the introduction of American slavery there was no other term given for the race of black men. But the introduction of the map of the new world called America made the fact clear that all children born here should be called Americans.<sup>164</sup>

Anderson sent her writings to papers in Wichita and the *Parsons Weekly Blade*.<sup>165</sup>

While newspapers might publish correspondence from the same writers, the editors, on occasion, became territorial in staking out claims for readership. Several readers wrote the *Leavenworth Advocate* and complained about receiving the *American Citizen* instead of the *Advocate*. The paper questioned "whether some one is playing double on us, and

is soliciting for the *Citizen* under the cover of the *Advocate*?" The *Advocate* also speculated whether the *Citizen* was using "surreptitious" methods to undercut the Leavenworth paper's circulation.<sup>166</sup> Surprisingly, even though newspapers competed for readers in many of the same towns and cities, generally territoriality was not a major contention among the papers. A far greater concern was the lack of paid subscribers, a common malady.

#### The Press as a Resource

Despite the ongoing challenge of collecting payments from readers, black leaders recognized the important role black newspapers played in fostering connectedness and creating a sense of belonging to a much-larger community. Such a notion was apparent when the Rev. W. L. Grant and J. B. Bass of Topeka issued a call for a statewide convention in Topeka on September 3, 1896.<sup>167</sup> Grant and Bass planned the meeting for the purpose of discussing "the social, industrial and political interests of the Colored race."<sup>168</sup> Fifty-two of seventy-two delegates reportedly attended, representing twenty counties where the largest number of blacks lived. Among the topics discussed at the convention were inequities that were part of the "social condition of the Negro race in all its phases."<sup>169</sup>

The delegates were well aware that prospects for African Americans achieving equal rights with whites had ebbed. Just a few months earlier, the Supreme Court ruled on the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case. The Court's decision

sanctioned separate-but-equal conveyances for black and white railroad passengers in the South, a custom commonly enforced even before several states first legalized the practice in the 1880s.<sup>170</sup> While the decision did not encourage implementation of Jim Crow cars for trains traveling through Kansas, the ruling did legitimize segregation in the state.

African Americans often encountered racial segregation at public facilities and establishments throughout Kansas.<sup>171</sup> The black press published incidents of discriminatory treatment, such as a white Atchison restaurateur who reportedly rebuffed Topeka *Call* editor William Pope because he was black.<sup>172</sup> By 1896, following the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling, these occurrences were more visible in the press.<sup>173</sup> The *National Reflector* of Wichita reported that a local hotel denied accommodations to members of the Tennessee Jubilee Singers.<sup>174</sup>

In addition, segregation evidenced itself in the public schools. Since 1879, school boards in most Kansas cities generally had denied black children, such as Tilford Davis Jr., the choice of attending schools with whites.<sup>175</sup> The Wyandotte school superintendent refused to enroll Davis, who later became a correspondent for several Kansas papers, in the city's high school. The superintendent reportedly "had received no orders from the board admitting colored pupils."<sup>176</sup>

In light of such problems, before concluding the Topeka meeting, the delegates passed several resolutions that underscored those resources they viewed as valuable for addressing their concerns. Regarding the state's black newspapers, the delegates wrote:

Resolved: That we encourage the establishment of newspapers in every community where there are 500 Colored people. It is with pride that we point with joy to the grand achievements of the Herald [of] Leavenworth, the Blade [of] Parsons, National Reflector [of] Wichita, American Citizen [of] Kansas City, and the Call [of] Topeka, as worthy of encouragement and support.<sup>177</sup>

The convention reinforced the necessity of black journals in populated areas, as well as the collective contribution the press could make toward efforts and concerns of communities isolated from one another. Miles separated enclaves of African Americans in Kansas, yet newspapers distributed throughout the state minimized the distance between communities and reinforced the idea of a statewide--even national--community, one larger than the sum of its parts.

Notes

<sup>1</sup>Among the earliest newspapers were the *Colored Radical* in Leavenworth, the *Colored Citizen*, founded in Fort Scott and later moved to Topeka, the *Lawrence Vindicator*, the *Kansas Herald* of Topeka, the *Topeka Tribune*, and the *Western Recorder* of Lawrence. See Dorothy V. Smith, "The Black Press and the Search for Hope and Equality in Kansas, 1865-1985," in *The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865-1985*, ed. Henry Lewis Suggs, 107-134 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 14 April 1893.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 12 May 1893.

<sup>4</sup>Northeast counties, on the other hand, comprised 68 percent. See 1880 census data, "Historical United States Census Data Browser" [online database], accessed 22 October 2000, available from <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/censusbin/conesus/con.pl>; Internet.

<sup>5</sup>Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the West, 1528-1990* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 136-143.

<sup>6</sup>Randall B. Woods, *A Black Odyssey: John Waller and the Promise of American Life, 1878-1900* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1981), 66-70.

<sup>7</sup>Randall B. Woods, "Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation? The 'Color Line' in Kansas, 1878-1900," in *African Americans on the Western Frontier*, eds. Monroe Lee Billington and Roger D. Hardaway (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1998), 142.

<sup>8</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 31 August 1895.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* Dennis Thompson, of Kansas City, Missouri, sometimes wrote under the byline of "The Colt." He was a regular contributor to numerous black newspapers, including the *Colored American* in Washington, D.C., during the 1890s.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>Gunner Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem & Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1944), 867.

<sup>12</sup>For examples, see *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 29 August 1896; *Leavenworth Herald*, 18 January 1896; *American Citizen*, 6 September 1889; *Kansas State Ledger*, 22 September 1892.

<sup>13</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 23 June 1894.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 2 October 1897.

<sup>15</sup>*National Reflector*, 22 August 1896; 23 January 1897.

<sup>16</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 29 October 1892.

<sup>17</sup>*American Citizen*, 6 September 1889; *Atchison Blade*, 27 August 1892; 15 July 1893; *Kansas State Ledger*, 2 December 1892.

<sup>18</sup>*People's Friend*, 22 June 1894.

<sup>19</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 31 August 1895.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 27 January 1894.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 31 August 1895.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 13 October 1893.

<sup>24</sup>*National Baptist World*, 31 August 1894.

<sup>25</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 23 February 1895. *National Baptist World* editor S. W. Jones may have had difficulty managing the paper after he was elected constable of Wichita in October 1894. See H. Craig Miner, *Wichita: The Magic City* (Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum Association, 1988), 17, 96.

<sup>26</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 23 February 1895.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 4 April 1895.

<sup>28</sup>For example, the Knights of Pythias held annual sessions in cities throughout Kansas. At one meeting in Junction City, representatives attended from the following lodges: Wichita, Topeka, Lawrence, Parsons, Arkansas City, Fort Scott, Salina, Pittsburg, and Atchison (*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 14 August 1897).

Masons and other fraternities experienced a growth period from 1865-1900, during which fraternal orders became an important institution in black communities. As class defining institutions, the orders separated their members, both socially and psychologically, from the black masses. See William Muraskin, *Middle-class Blacks in a White Society: Prince Hall Freemasonry in America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), 25, 28, 160.

<sup>29</sup>*American Citizen*, 1 July 1892.

<sup>30</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 22 February 1896.

<sup>31</sup>*American Citizen*, 11 December 1891; *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 22 October 1892; *Kansas State Ledger*, 30 December 1892; *Atchison Blade*, 27 August 1892.

<sup>32</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 6 January 1893.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 6 January 1893.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 30 December 1892.

<sup>35</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 27 August 1892.

<sup>36</sup>*American Citizen*, 27 February 1891.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 20 February 1891.

<sup>38</sup>*American Citizen*, 27 February 1891.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 13 March 1891.

<sup>40</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 16 March 1894.

<sup>41</sup>See Bernell E. Tripp, "The Media and Community Cohesiveness," in *The Significance of the Media in American History*, eds. James Startt and Wm. David Sloan, 147-164 (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 1994).

<sup>42</sup>Kansas towns were similar to other Western black urban communities in the 1890s, where most of these professions, along with doctors, formed the elite segment of society. In Western cities, though, class distinctions were less apparent than in eastern cities (See Taylor, 193). For a discussion on occupations of black middle and upper classes in the late-nineteenth century, see Willard B. Gatewood Jr., *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920* (Bloomington: The University of Indiana Press, 1990), 27, 64, 76, 121, 191; August Meier, "Negro Class Structure and Ideology in the Age of Booker T. Washington," *Phylon* 23 (Fall 1962): 258-266.

<sup>43</sup>*National Reflector*, 15 August 1896.

<sup>44</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 10 October 1896; *Kansas State Ledger*, 5 August 1892; *American Citizen*, 20 April 1892.

<sup>45</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 4 February 1893.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 22 October 1892. Childers, who edited the *Times-Observer* in Topeka, had associations with several newspapers, including the *Indianapolis Freeman*, the *Leavenworth Advocate*, the *Southern Argus*, and the *American Citizen* (*American Citizen*, 11 March 1892).

<sup>47</sup>Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 214; Thomas C. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka, Kansas, 1865-1915: A Social History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 98.

<sup>48</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 28 December 1895.

<sup>49</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 31 May 1890.

<sup>50</sup>Marie Deacon, "Kansas as the 'Promised Land': The View of the Black Press, 1890-1900" (Unpublished master's thesis, University of Arkansas, 1972), preface; Tripp, 163-164.

<sup>51</sup>*American Citizen*, 10 January 1890; *National Reflector*, 9 October 1897.

<sup>52</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 20 July 1889.

<sup>53</sup>*National Reflector*, 26 June 1897.

<sup>54</sup>*American Citizen*, 17 January 1890; *Kansas State Ledger*, 26 August 1892.

<sup>55</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 12 December 1892; 26 November 1892. Jones, who sang bass, also performed in vocal groups. See *People's Friend*, 29 July 1894.

<sup>56</sup>*National Reflector*, 14 March 1896.

<sup>57</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 11 May 1889.

<sup>58</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 23 June 1894.

<sup>59</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 27 April 1894.

<sup>60</sup>Excerpt from the *Topeka State Journal*, a white paper, in the *Kansas Blackman*, 20 April 1894.

<sup>61</sup>*Kansas Blackman*, 20 April 1894. According to the *American Citizen* (11 May 1894), Driver served fifteen months in prison after police had arrested and charged him with committing "improper intimacy" with an underage, pregnant black girl. Driver was found guilty and sentenced to five years in prison. The girl gave birth to a redheaded white child, born five months after she initially had met Driver. "Everybody who knows Mr. Driver, knows full well that he could not pass for white or even light at noon day nor at midnight," wrote the *Citizen*. Facts were gathered and presented before Gov. Humphrey and the Board of Pardons, and Driver was exonerated.

Humphrey, an attorney and a former newspaper editor from Independence, Kansas, served as governor from 1889 to 1893. See Edith Connelly Ross, "Chapter 57, Lyman U. Humphrey," in *A Standard of Kansas and Kansans*, Vol. 2 [book online], compiled by William E. Connelley (Kansas State Historical Society, 1918), accessed 30 September 2000, available at <http://169.147.169.151/genweb/archives/1918ks/v2/ch57p1.html>; Internet.

<sup>62</sup>*American Citizen*, 11 May 1894. The *Kansas Blackman* wrote that the conflict between Pope, Jeltz, and Driver "had its birth in the nest of jealousy, was nursed in the lap of envy, and when matured came forth in the regal robe of desparation [sic].". Driver charged that that Pope, with

revolver in hand, had ordered the *Kansas Blackman* editor to leave town (*Kansas Blackman*, 15 June 1894).

<sup>63</sup>Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 23 June 1894.

<sup>64</sup>*American Citizen*, 1 February 1895.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>*Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918* (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1919; Reprint, New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969), 64-65.

<sup>67</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 26 June 1894; 17 August 1895.

<sup>68</sup>*National Reflector*, 30 October 1897.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 23 October 1897.

<sup>70</sup>Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 11 November 1894.

<sup>71</sup>Emma Lou Thornbrough, *T. Thomas Fortune: Militant Journalist* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 40; Pride and Clint C. Wilson II, *A History of the Black Press* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1997), 171-174.

<sup>72</sup>Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 30 March 1895.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Dennis Thompson, "WHAT ABOUT THE NEWSPAPER CONVENTION [sic]," reprinted from the *Statesmen-Exponent* in the Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 27 April 1895.

<sup>75</sup>*American Citizen*, 10 July 1896.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>*American Citizen*, 17 July 1896. Waller returned to Kansas City and the *Citizen* after being released from prison in France, where he was a political prisoner. Appointed by President Harrison, Waller had served as U.S. consul to Madagascar from 1891 to 1894, but he decided to stay on the island after his term to develop land

investments. He was found guilty of being a Hova spy in Madagascar and served a ten-month sentence. For a detailed account of the "Waller Affair," see Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 111-176.

<sup>78</sup>*American Citizen*, 17 July 1896.

<sup>79</sup>There is a break in the sequence of extant issues of the *American Citizen*, but a small group of editors apparently met in Sedalia and set the date and location for the next year's meeting.

<sup>80</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 4 September 1897.

<sup>81</sup>*Indianapolis Freeman*, 11 September 1897. The "Kaw cities" referred to Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri, divided by the Kaw (Kansas) River.

<sup>82</sup>*Indianapolis Freeman*, 11 September 1897.

<sup>83</sup>"The Annual Address of Harry B. Graham, president of the Western Negro Press Association of Kansas City," *National Reflector*, 28 August 1897; *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 27 July 1900.

<sup>84</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 31 July 1897; 21 August 1897.

<sup>85</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 14 August 1897.

<sup>86</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 28 September 1897.

<sup>87</sup>*National Reflector*, 28 August 1897; *Indianapolis Freeman*, 11 September 1897.

<sup>88</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 28 August 1897; *National Reflector*, 28 August 1897. The third annual meeting was held in Omaha, Nebraska, August 22-23, 1898; the fourth annual meeting in Denver, Colorado, August 28-29, 1899; and the fifth annual meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, August 7-8, 1900 (*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 23 July 1898; 5 July 1899; 27 July 1900).

<sup>89</sup>Emma Thornbrough, "American Negro Newspapers, 1880-1914," *Business History Review* 50, no. 4 (Winter 1966), 467-490; Rashey B. Moten, "The Negro Press of Kansas" (Unpublished master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1938), 16-17.

<sup>90</sup>Wichita *Globe*, 17 February 1887.

<sup>91</sup>Pride and Wilson, 21-22.

<sup>92</sup>Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 2 September 1893.

<sup>93</sup>American *Citizen*, 23 February 1894.

<sup>94</sup>Leavenworth *Advocate*, 11 May 1889.

<sup>95</sup>American *Citizen*, 26 February 1892.

<sup>96</sup>Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 24 August 1895.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 15 October 1892; 23 December 1893; 13 October 1894.

<sup>98</sup>"The *Blade*," 31 July 1897.

<sup>99</sup>Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 23 May 1896; 22 August 1896; The *Blade*, 31 July 1897.

<sup>100</sup>American *Citizen*, 18 August 1893.

<sup>101</sup>Willard B. Gatewood Jr., ed., *Slave and Freeman: The Autobiography of George L. Knox* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1979), 172, 192; American *Citizen*, 18 August 1893.

<sup>102</sup>American *Citizen*, 18 August 1893.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 4 May 1894. Driver started the Kansas *Blackman* in Topeka, but eventually moved the paper to Coffeyville in southeast Kansas, where his mother lived.

<sup>104</sup>Leavenworth *Advocate*, 11 May 1889. N. Clark Smith became business manager when Townsend took over as editor of the newspaper. Smith had hired two young schoolboys, Wm. Harris and Edward Morris (Leavenworth *Advocate*, 23 March 1889). In a letter to the editor, Paul H. Bray, step-son of John L. Waller and correspondent for the several black newspapers, praised the *Advocate* for employing these young men as typesetters. Bray urged other black leaders and businessmen to follow the newspaper's example as many young

black men had difficulty finding employment in white-owned businesses (*Leavenworth Advocate*, 20 April 1889).

<sup>105</sup>Will Harris, along with Nat Langston of Lawrence and Grant Brown of Atchison, founded the *Atchison Blade* in July 1892. Harris left the paper to become managing editor of the *Future State*, Kansas City, Missouri, in February 1893.

<sup>106</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 18 May 1894. Bruce had purchased the *Atchison Blade* from Nat Langston.

<sup>107</sup>*Wichita Globe*, 1 April 1887, 22 April 1887.

<sup>108</sup>*The People's Friend*, 10 August 1894, 24 August 1894; *National Baptist World*, 31 August 1894.

<sup>109</sup>Reprinted in *National Baptist World*, 7 September 1894.

<sup>110</sup>*National Reflector*, 8 December 1895.

<sup>111</sup>Captain S. W. Jones led Company E, made up primarily of troops from Sedgwick County. See *Kansas Troops in the Volunteer Service of the United States in the Spanish and Philippine Wars: Mustered in Under the First and Second Calls of the President of the United States, May 9, 1890-October 28, 1899*. Reprinted from the Twelfth Biennial Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas (Topeka: W. Y. Morgan, State Printer, 1900), 235-237; *The Morning Eagle*, Wichita, 14 August 1960.

<sup>112</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 18 March 1893.

<sup>113</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 11 July 1891.

<sup>114</sup>*American Citizen*, 11 March 1892.

<sup>115</sup>See the *Indianapolis Freeman*, 23 August 1890; 6 October 1890; 13 October 1890; 20 December 1890.

<sup>116</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 2 May 1891; 4 July 1891.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, 25 July 1891.

<sup>118</sup>*Historic Times*, 29 August 1891.

<sup>119</sup>Atchison *Blade*, 6 August 1892.

<sup>120</sup>Among the papers were the Leavenworth Advocate, the Leavenworth Herald, the American Citizen of Kansas City, the Atchison *Blade*, the Historic Times of Lawrence, the *Times-Observer* of Topeka, and Wichita's National Reflector.

<sup>121</sup>American Citizen, 16 October 1891.

<sup>122</sup>Leavenworth Advocate, 23 May 1891.

<sup>123</sup>On occasion, Grant Brown used his initials "G. B.," "G.," or "B." to sign his correspondence. For examples, see "ATCHISON, KAS.," Leavenworth Advocate, 16 May 1891; 23 May 1891; 6 June 1891.

<sup>124</sup>National Reflector, 9 October 1897.

<sup>125</sup>Leavenworth Advocate, 25 July 1891.

<sup>126</sup>Historic Times, 7 November 1891.

<sup>127</sup>National Reflector, 9 October 1897.

<sup>128</sup>Leavenworth Herald, 10 March 1894.

<sup>129</sup>American Citizen, 5 February 1892.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

<sup>131</sup>Atchison *Blade*, 18 March 1893.

<sup>132</sup>G. L. Harrison, "Advice to Negro Reporters and Correspondents," American Citizen, 13 March 1891.

<sup>133</sup>Harrison, American Citizen, 13 March 1891.

<sup>134</sup>Leavenworth Advocate, 23 March 1889.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 16 March 1889; 27 April 1889.

<sup>136</sup>American Citizen, 9 August 1889.

<sup>137</sup>G. W. Harrison, a barber, was named city solicitor and collector for the Advocate (Leavenworth Advocate, 1 June 1889); the Rev. J. W. Ransom agreed to travel on

behalf of the *Blade* (*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 21 January 1893); W. J. Johnson, a teacher in Topeka, was general agent for the *American Citizen* for several years, as well as the paper's Topeka correspondent (*American Citizen*, 16 August 1889).

<sup>138</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 21 January 1893.

<sup>139</sup>"The *Blade*," 31 July 1897; William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas*, "Labette County, Part 4," Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883 [book online]; accessed 22 October 2000; available at <http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/kancoll/books/cutler/labette/labette-co-p4.html>; Internet.

<sup>140</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 10 November 1894.

<sup>141</sup>*American Citizen*, 16 August 1889.

<sup>142</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 5 August 1892.

<sup>143</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 3 April 1893.

<sup>144</sup>*American Citizen*, 20 April 1894.

<sup>145</sup>*Wichita Globe*, 3 March 1887.

<sup>146</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 28 December 1895.

<sup>147</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 20 July 1889; *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 24 September 1892.

<sup>148</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 5 November 1892.

<sup>149</sup>*Ibid.* 24 December 1892.

<sup>150</sup>*Ibid.*, 26 November 1892.

<sup>151</sup>*Ibid.*, 18 February 1893.

<sup>152</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 18 March 1893; *People's Friend*, Wichita, 28 September 1894.

<sup>153</sup>"The *Blade*," 31 July 1897.

<sup>154</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 28 December 1895.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., 5 May 1894.

<sup>156</sup>Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 9 September 1893.

<sup>157</sup>*American Citizen*, 16 August 1889.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid., 11 March 1892.

<sup>159</sup>Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 13 October 1894.

<sup>160</sup>*National Reflector*, 20 March 1897. The list included Lucy Hopkins, Baxter Springs; Helen Edmanson, Chetopa; J. B. Odair, Emporia; Lola Thomas, Hutchinson; Leonora Bradshaw, Jetmore; Grenada B. Turner, Kingman; Josie Bradley, Kinsley; Sadie Clark, Leavenworth; Gertrude Solomon, Topeka; Ida Hills, Valley Center and Sedgwick County; Geo. B. Robinson, Wellington; S. B. Bowers, Eureka Springs, Arkansas; and Naomi Anderson, San Francisco, California.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid., 20 June 1896.

<sup>162</sup>M. A. Majors, *Noted Negro Women; Their Triumphs and Activities* [book online] (Jackson, TN: M. V. Lynk Publishing House, 1893), 85, in "African American Biographical Database," accessed 30 September 2000, available from <http://aabd.chadwyck.com>; Internet.

<sup>163</sup>Majors, *Noted Negro Women*, 85-86.

<sup>164</sup>*National Reflector*, 23 October 1897.

<sup>165</sup>See *People's Friend*, Wichita, 10 August 1894; *National Baptist World*, Wichita, 21 September 1894; Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 16 February 1895; 2 March 1895, 9 March 1895; *National Reflector*, 5 September 1896; 27 February 1897; 3 April 1897; 23 October 1897.

<sup>166</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 27 April 1889.

<sup>167</sup>Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 5 September 1896.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid., 3 October 1896.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid., 3 October 1896.

<sup>170</sup>Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: The Oxford University Press, 1992), 143-146.

<sup>171</sup>The Leavenworth *Herald* reported that such incidents "occurred all over the state, especially at Wichita, Wyandotte, Leavenworth, Topeka and Atchison" (*Leavenworth Herald*, 10 April 1897). See Woods, "Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation?" 135-137. According to Woods, separate coaches, on occasion, did travel on Kansas railroads.

<sup>172</sup>Atchison *Blade*, 5 November 1892. The black press of Topeka expressed concern that the influx of poor Exodusters in the 1880s would lead to increased discriminatory treatment against the city's new and established black residents. See Cox, 75.

<sup>173</sup>Cox, 117.

<sup>174</sup>*National Reflector*, 1 February 1896. According to the Parsons *Weekly Blade*, a civil rights lawsuit was filed against three Wichita hotels for refusing to accommodate the singers (*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 16 February 1896).

<sup>175</sup>Woods, "Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation," 134. A law passed in 1879 mandated integrated secondary high schools, but allowed for separate primary schools.

<sup>176</sup>*Cleveland Gazette*, 22 September 1883.

<sup>177</sup>From the convention report, published in the Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 3 October 1896.

## PART TWO: GRAPPLING WITH ISSUES

CHAPTER 4  
PLATFORMS FOR POLITICAL INFLUENCE

The *Colored Radical*, one of the earliest papers that sought a black readership in Kansas, was a campaign sheet for the Republican Party in 1876. The party provided financial backing for the newspaper, printed by a white man and edited by two black ministers, T. W. Henderson of Leavenworth and A. T. Williams of Lawrence.<sup>1</sup> The editors maintained offices in both Leavenworth and Lawrence, cities with the largest percentage of blacks in the state.<sup>2</sup>

Republican leaders recognized that these concentrations of potential black voters, readied by the newspaper, could shift the state's political balance for the 1876 national election. The *Colored Radical* ran its first issue in August, about six weeks prior to the election.<sup>3</sup> The paper carried some local news, but its content dwelt almost exclusively on political information and editorials favoring the Republicans.<sup>4</sup> Listing the candidates slated on the Republican ticket, Henderson and Williams urged readers to cast their votes on behalf of the

party. One week after the election the paper expired, having served its primary purpose of garnering black votes.<sup>5</sup>

Campaign newspapers such as the *Colored Radical* point to the relatively brief life span of black newspapers in Kansas in the late-nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Some newspapers ran only a single issue; others operated less than two or three months.<sup>7</sup> Without political-party subsidies, editors were forced to close the doors.

The development of the black press in Kansas tied itself closely to the state's political milieu during this era. Political campaigns initiated many of the newspapers, but a number of editors managed to continue publishing well beyond Election Day. The *Kansas State Ledger* of Topeka, for example, was founded during the 1892 campaign. In the first issue, editor F. L. Jeltz told readers they could expect to receive the *Ledger* even after they had cast their ballots.<sup>8</sup> Several months after the campaign, Jeltz declared the paper politically independent, cutting itself from party resources. The newspaper managed to survive for more than a decade, despite the loss of party support.

Political activities received priority coverage in the *Ledger* from its inception to its demise. Jeltz and his journalistic colleagues believed enfranchisement and political efforts established their influence and also

afforded protection and recognition for African Americans in Kansas communities.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter details how African Americans used the press to great advantage. The papers helped the voters to achieve some social and political gains in Kansas in the late-nineteenth century, a pivotal period for the state's black electorate. After blacks entered the political arena in the late 1860s, they optimistically anticipated making quick progress.<sup>10</sup> They turned to their community leaders and newspapers for guidance in understanding legislative issues that affected their lives and in casting their ballots.<sup>11</sup> African Americans, informed about candidates and issues by black newspapers,<sup>12</sup> found their votes could be a determining factor in the outcome of some elections.<sup>13</sup>

In Kansas, African Americans in urban communities formed a significant political constituency by the early 1880s.<sup>14</sup> The election of black entrepreneur E. P. McCabe as auditor in the 1882 and 1884 elections provided the momentum for the state's black Republican leaders.<sup>15</sup> His success raised hopes for increased opportunities for political patronage and recognition of African Americans. Supported by churches and fraternal organizations, black newspapers played a crucial role during these years when

black Kansans sought to establish themselves as a viable political voice in Kansas.<sup>16</sup>

Black political leaders, many with direct associations to the press, relied on the newspapers to establish a sphere of influence among black voters, as well as white party leaders. Newspapers enhanced readers' awareness of political issues that affected communities of African Americans throughout the state, addressing concerns that ranged from education to civil rights. The press presented these issues to readers from varying points of view. As one Kansas editor phrased it, black newspapers provided "all shades of opinion from the stalwart republican to dyed-in-the-wood democrat."<sup>17</sup>

#### The Political Path

Political opportunities in Kansas were among the factors that attracted professional blacks, including attorneys, teachers, and journalists.<sup>18</sup> When John L. Waller, an attorney and journalist, arrived from Iowa in 1878, he became part of the active and well-organized black Republicans in Leavenworth.<sup>19</sup> Several years later he started a newspaper, the *Western Recorder*, in nearby Lawrence.

Waller and other newspaper editors not only promoted political causes, but a number of them ran for local and state offices.<sup>20</sup> After an election, black leaders looked

with anticipation for the "appointive plum."<sup>21</sup> Several months after the 1888 election, the Leavenworth Advocate reminded readers:

We are still waiting to make the announcement of the appointment, of some good colored republican in Kansas by governor Humphrey. We are anxious to say to the country, that our governor is bound to recognize the colored element of the party. Let the music begin.<sup>22</sup>

By September, the Advocate announced Waller had accepted an appointment by Governor Lyman Humphrey to work at the state school for the blind in Kansas City.<sup>23</sup>

In the 1894 election, B. K. Bruce Jr. of the Leavenworth *Herald* campaigned for Republican E. N. Morrill, who ran against incumbent Governor Lorenzo Lewelling, a Populist. According to Bruce, the *Herald* played a crucial role in Morrill's win. After the election, Bruce wrote:

The power of the press is conceded by all. Its constant and silent influence moulds [sic], shapes and directs the destiny of nations. It is the most potent actor in the civilization of mankind. Such being the case, THE HERALD did its part. . . . In all the campaign THE HERALD said more good things about Major Morrill than all the papers in this county.<sup>24</sup>

As a reward for Bruce's service, the Morrill administration offered Bruce a position in Secretary of State W. C. Edwards' office.<sup>25</sup> The *American Citizen* noted that while most of the appointments for blacks were positions as janitors and guards, Bruce's appointment of

"an 'uptown job' so to speak is all right as far as it goes, but the distance is too short."<sup>26</sup>

In the political environment, the affiliation of a newspaper was an important aspect of its identity. Of the more than forty black newspapers published during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the majority aligned themselves with the Republicans, whose party dominated politics in Kansas.<sup>27</sup> Many black voters sided with the "party of Lincoln" in gratitude for abolishing slavery, even though they repeatedly encountered indifference for their concerns from white Republican-elected officials.<sup>28</sup>

Among the Republican-aligned black newspapers, some heralded wholehearted endorsement of the Grand Old Party, while others pledged conditional allegiance. The *Kansas Blackman*, in promising to guard the rights of blacks, vowed the following:

We believe the principles of republicanism to be incomparably superior to those of any other political party. We believe they are better calculated to preserve and maintain the higher degree of modern civilization and national greatness. We believe the Negro is an American. We believe in America for Americans. This is the gospel of republicanism.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, the *People's Friend* of Wichita told its readers that "[i]n politics we are Republicans, and shall expect from that party such support as our work merits."<sup>30</sup>

Among those that extended conditional support for the Republican Party were three newspapers in northeast Kansas. The *American Citizen*, the second newspaper founded by party loyalist John L. Waller, informed readers:

The policy of this paper will be Republican; but we shall always place the citizen before the state and adhere to the party only as a means to attain and accomplish the greatest good to our county.<sup>31</sup>

Like Waller's paper, the *Times-Observer* of Topeka also backed "the principles of the Republican party, not because we believe that the Negroes owe undying allegiance to that party, but because we have faith in its principle as applied to the management and control of our general government."<sup>32</sup> The chief priority for editor J. Humes Childers, however, was putting "the Negro first, last and all the time."<sup>33</sup>

Following reorganization and a change in editorial leadership, the *Leavenworth Advocate*, which had begun as a politically independent paper, identified itself as a Republican journal.<sup>34</sup> The new editor, W. B. Townsend, clearly expected that white Republican leaders would ignore black party loyalists. The *Advocate* "will fight the Republican cause upon any battle field," Townsend pledged. "While it is willing to do that it will insist that simple

justice and proper recognition be given to the colored element of the party."<sup>35</sup>

A number of newspapers chose to separate themselves from the Republican Party. While few blacks in Kansas considered the Democratic Party as a suitable option because of its anti-black policies in the South, C. H. J. Taylor of Kansas City was one editor who openly supported the party.<sup>36</sup> Following a political meeting that convened in Topeka in 1888 to discuss race problems, Taylor became spokesman for black Democrats and "independents" in Kansas.<sup>37</sup>

Taylor contended that blacks should not automatically rule out the Democratic Party. He believed that African Americans needed to vote for whatever party platform favored their interests. When Taylor assumed the helm of the *American Citizen* in 1891, he maintained its independent stance, persistently urging blacks to vote their conscience.<sup>38</sup>

Besides the *Citizen*, the *Kansas State Ledger* and the *Parsons Weekly Blade* freed themselves for a time from blind Republican loyalty.<sup>39</sup> In March 1893, editor F. L. Jeltz announced that the *Ledger* had worked faithfully for the Republicans, but "[h]ereafter, the paper will be independent, and will work for the party that will do the

most toward giving the negro race the proper recognition that justly belongs to them."<sup>40</sup> The *Parsons Blade* believed more could be accomplished if voters would "unite for the common good of the race, irrespective of party, creed or denomination."<sup>41</sup>

Amid growing dissatisfaction with the Republican Party, some black political leaders sought an alternative party for gaining political influence. During the early 1890s, the People's Party, popularly known as the Populist Party, actively sought the black vote in Kansas. The People's Party, a third-party movement for political and economic reform, was born in Kansas in June 1890 at a joint state conference of delegates representing the Farmers' Alliance, union laborites, the Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association, the Grangers, and the Knights of Labor.<sup>42</sup> Among the black "Pops" in Kansas were William Eagleson, editor of the *Colored Citizen* of Topeka, and D. L. Roberson, who edited the *Globe* and the *Kansas Headlight* in Wichita.

Initially, blacks moved toward the party in reaction against the apathy and lack of recognition they encountered from white Republican politicians.<sup>43</sup> In particular, Republicans overlooked blacks when handing out political appointments following elections. The party also remained mute about issues of discrimination and racial violence.

For African Americans, the Populist Party offered means for gaining protection and overcoming barriers of prejudice.<sup>44</sup> The Populists opposed lynching and the convict leasing system, supported laborers, and addressed economic imbalances.<sup>45</sup> They also endorsed the participation of blacks in the political process.

In 1890, the People's Party nominated Benjamin Foster, a militant minister from Topeka, as its candidate for state auditorship.<sup>46</sup> Many Republicans viewed the move as a tactic to lure disgruntled black voters to the Populists.<sup>47</sup> In the previous election, Republicans had chosen a white man for the auditor slot, a move that angered many blacks. Since the election of McCabe in the early 1880s, African Americans had viewed that position as belonging to blacks.<sup>48</sup>

Even though People's candidate Foster was defeated in 1890, he made a respectable showing, gathering as many votes as other Populist candidates.<sup>49</sup> Black voters contributed to the election outcome as the Populists made inroads into the state government.<sup>50</sup> Republican Lyman Humphrey had managed to win the governorship, but the Populists and Democrats gained control of the House of Representatives, shaking up the state's political system.<sup>51</sup>

In 1892, the Populists gained further political ground by capturing all the state offices, including Democrat-

Populist candidate Lorenzo Lewelling as governor, and all but one of the state's congressional seats.<sup>52</sup> Under Lewelling's leadership, the Populists indicated that the party would not neglect the concerns of blacks. Populist support among African Americans increased after Governor Lewelling publicly denounced the lynching of a black prisoner in Salina and urged the arrest of those who committed his murder.<sup>53</sup>

In 1894, Governor Lewelling, who also owned a dairy and poultry business in Wichita, was slated for re-election on the Democratic-Populist ticket. The pending election threatened to shake further the control that Republicans maintained since statehood in 1861. Joining the "Pop" momentum were two Wichita journalists who had left the Republican Party, W. A. Bettis and D. L. Roberson.<sup>54</sup> Bettis and Roberson co-edited a Populist-affiliated newspaper, the *Kansas Headlight*, in Wichita, and it reflected increasing frustrations of blacks working for the Republicans who were disappointed by the lack of reciprocity from party leaders. The *Kansas Headlight* wrote:

We have been taught for twenty-five years that no other political party was a friend to the negro but the republican party, the buffs and kicks she has given us has taught us better . . . . That the republican party did many good things for the colored man goes without say, but they must not forget the twenty-five years or more of blinded allegiance of the

party has amply liquidated any and all debts that the colored man has ever owed the G.O.P.<sup>55</sup>

Some of Bettis's journalistic colleagues questioned his motives in joining the Populists. A Republican paper in Wichita, the *People's Friend*, inferred that Bettis had defected to the Populists so he could tap into funds needed to start a paper, rather than because of his adherence to Populist principles.<sup>56</sup> According to one source, the Populist Party intended to contribute \$3,000 toward running the *Kansas Headlight*.<sup>57</sup>

Bettis's initiative on behalf of the Populists stirred fury among blacks in Wichita. Letters to the editor in the *People's Friend* voiced widespread dismay. After the *Kansas Headlight* attacked a black Republican candidate, John M. Brown of Topeka, a writer who referred to himself as "an Abraham Lincoln Republican" sent a letter to the *People's Friend*, denouncing the "two-by-four Populist paper."<sup>58</sup> Another newspaper reader, while acknowledging that Populists had granted appointments to blacks after the past election, found some of the appointments degrading. "Why a position to clean corridors, wash windows and such dirty work as that, which a white man would not stoop to, unless he was near starvation," the letter writer questioned.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the derision and accusations about his motives, Bettis stumped for the Populist cause, visiting area communities to convince voters to side with the Pops.<sup>60</sup> His efforts were halted abruptly when, after publishing for less than two months, the *Kansas Headlight* expired. Apparently, the Populist Party did not commit the funds needed to pay the printers.<sup>61</sup> With Roberson having left for Colorado,<sup>62</sup> Bettis decided "the paper had to give up the ghost."<sup>63</sup> The *Headlight*, according to the *People's Friend*, had "gone to where the woodbine twineth and no more will its rasping voice be heard in the land shouting virtue's(?) [sic] of sweet old Populism."<sup>64</sup>

The passing of the *Kansas Headlight* did not go unnoticed among the state's black newspaper network. In Wichita, editor S. W. Jones of the *National Baptist World* was quick to publicize the unexpected change in vocation of his brother-in-law and long-time friend. The week following the *Headlight's* last issue, Jones wrote:

Our esteemed contemporary of the Populist faith, the *Kansas Headlight*, has run aground and W. A. Bettis, the editor of the same is now out hunting up foot race matches for his brother Jim who is said to be quite a sprinter. Success to you Bill!<sup>65</sup>

According to the *Leavenworth Herald*, the failure of the *Kansas Headlight* only foreshadowed the fate of the Populist Party. The *Herald* noted the "death came sooner

than we expected. The *Headlight* should have waited until [the] November [election] and died with the Pop party.<sup>66</sup>

Despite the demise of the *Headlight*, the *American Citizen* intensified its commitment to political independence. The *Citizen*, siding with Bettis, rebuked those Republican newspapers that delighted in the *Headlight*'s demise because such animosity hindered, rather than aided, the establishment of black-owned businesses. Warning that Republican papers might suffer a similar fate, the *Citizen* cautioned:

We are frank to state that we desire the success of race institutions and race enterprises in preference to any party . . . . These brethren should curb their hilarious exuberance, since tomorrow they may die.<sup>67</sup>

The *National Baptist World* bristled at the *American Citizen*'s criticism and wasted no time in responding. Despite his long-term associations with Bettis, Jones expressed publicly his opinion about Bettis's motives in starting the paper. In defense of his position, Jones wrote:

We also are frank to state that we desire the success of race institutions and race enterprises, but neither of these was the *Headlight*; it was nothing more than a fake established for temporary momentary [sic] gain of a few ward-heeler politicians and a bulldozing campaign sheet with sincerity of purpose; and deserved its fate.<sup>68</sup>

Whatever breech may have occurred between Jones and Bettis, the men obviously resolved their differences; several years later when they worked together on another paper.<sup>69</sup>

Even though the majority of newspapers sided with the Republicans, the independent and Populist-aligned newspapers gave readers access to other points of view. Whether black newspapers adopted a partisan or nonpartisan position, they shared an overriding goal to further advance the status of African Americans within their local communities, as well as society at large.

As the means to advance the status of blacks, a primary goal of the newspapers was political patronage. If blacks were elected or appointed to political offices, African Americans would have some say-so about policies and decision-making that affected the black community. Part of the initial appeal of the Populist Party was its support for black candidates. Several running on the Populist ticket managed to win elections on the municipal and county levels, including barber John R. Lytle of Topeka, who ran successfully as assistant city jailer in 1896. In 1895, daughter Lutie Lytle received an appointment as assistant enrolling clerk for the Populists.<sup>70</sup> Lutie had worked with several black newspapers in the early 1890s, including the *Atchison Blade*, the *Kansas Blackman* of Topeka, and the

*American Citizen*, where she relayed local news and collected subscriptions as a correspondent for the Topeka community.<sup>71</sup>

The Parsons *Weekly Blade* posed the following question, which typified the responses from black newspapers to Lutie's position: "What office has the Republicans given to any of our girls?"<sup>72</sup> Her appointment sharply contrasted the lack of recognition accorded to black men, let alone black women, by the Republicans. "We're working for recognition and principle, but if one party won't recognize us another will," warned the *Weekly Blade*. "Our spirit will not always strive with the Republican party."<sup>73</sup>

To gain some control and say-so about the status of African Americans in Kansas, several journalists had personal ambitions in the political arena. While many served as political organizers and representatives of black communities, others sought elective and appointive offices. The newspapers became platforms for those seeking elective office at the municipal and state levels. By writing editorials, giving speeches, and attending area gatherings, editors expanded their sphere of influence as representative leaders of the black community. The network of black newspapers not only circulated information from one region to another, but the papers gained statewide

support among blacks for political candidates. With that end in mind, the newspapers endorsed political candidates for election, conveyed information about the pertinent issues, and urged readers to register and vote.<sup>74</sup>

As leaders within their communities, many editors readily chose to become politically active. Associations with a newspaper provided a natural entry into politics. A couple of journalists received national appointments as ministers to Liberia and Madagascar, and as register of deeds in Washington, D.C.<sup>75</sup> The most significant political activity, though, occurred on the state and local levels. Newspapermen ran for the positions of auditor and secretary of state on the state ticket, while in county and municipal elections, they sought the offices of police judge, justice of the peace, and constable.<sup>76</sup>

Evidence of the press's role in the political arena can be found in the campaigns of J. L. Waller and B. K. Bruce Jr., who actively pursued nominations on the Republican state ticket in the elections of 1890 and 1892. Like most candidates, Waller and Bruce relied on the press to help establish name recognition and build credibility, particularly among fellow black voters. In seeking public office, Waller and Bruce relied on the journalists to lay the groundwork in organizing their campaigns. Multiple

factors, such as political party dynamics, their campaign personalities, and leverage of the black press, influenced the outcome.

On the heels of B. F. Foster's auditorship nomination by the Populists in 1890, several newspaper editors in northeast Kansas mobilized black Republicans to support the nomination of a black candidate for the party's state ticket. The Leavenworth Advocate called for a meeting of black Republicans to choose a representative for the state convention in Topeka in September. The paper noted that since McCabe's two-term stint as auditor in the early 1880s, the party had not recognized blacks "in any substantial manner," either on the state or national level.<sup>77</sup> Inviting a response from black community leaders, the Advocate wrote:

We say let us come together, the leading colored men of the state and confer with each other about what is the best thing to do in approaching [the] campaign to the end that justice may be done to the colored element of the party.<sup>78</sup>

Several weeks later, the Advocate published an official convention notice that was distributed throughout the state. The organizers pointed to a primary reason for calling the statewide meeting:

[T]he Republican party, fortified behind a tremendous majority in this state, has been in a position to deny

to the colored voters the representation in any way commensurate with our numerical strength.<sup>79</sup>

Journalists and individuals associated with the press were among those who endorsed the effort.<sup>80</sup>

On 11 August 1890, black leaders from counties throughout Kansas assembled in Salina, intent on choosing "a colored man for a position on the Republican ticket," which would be confirmed at the state convention in less than a month.<sup>81</sup> African-American leaders wanted to position themselves to exert pressure for black representation on the 1890 Republican state ticket, especially since a number of party loyalists had deserted the GOP and joined the Populist Party.<sup>82</sup>

Convention organizers Townsend and Bruce of the Leavenworth Advocate, along with W. T. McGuinn of the American Citizen in Kansas City, made no secret that their choice was Waller of Lawrence.<sup>83</sup> Over the years, Waller worked steadfastly on behalf of Republicans, traveling across the state to give speeches and urge blacks to vote a straight party ticket.<sup>84</sup> Waller, himself, had waited patiently for the appropriate time to make this advance in his political career.<sup>85</sup>

After listening to the nomination speeches, the delegates voted their choice for state auditor. Convention

chairman Townsend called for the tally, and Waller emerged as the assembly's unanimous selection. When Townsend announced Waller's name, cheers and shouts of celebration erupted from the crowd; men waved their hats and women shook their handkerchiefs.<sup>86</sup> The convention leadership welcomed such a show of unity among the delegates. Spirits were running high because factions and disagreements predicted by the white press and some black leaders had not marred the gathering.<sup>87</sup>

The Salina convention was illustrative of the ties among the larger African-American community of Kansas. Much of the conference's success was due to the editors of the Leavenworth *Advocate* and *American Citizen*.<sup>88</sup> However, they needed the support and efforts of their colleagues to achieve the goal of electing a representative to work for the interests of the blacks of Kansas. Among the delegates at Salina were representatives from counties in the northeast, southeast, and southwest regions. Those associated with the black press were also well represented at the convention. The number included more than a dozen, with several providing leadership in convention committees.<sup>89</sup>

Despite the successful turnout at Salina, the unanimous selection of a nominee, and endorsements of

Waller by some white newspapers, Waller and his contingency of black Republican supporters were bitterly disappointed by the outcome at the state convention. Blacks could not wield the degree of leverage they had hoped for in Topeka. Prior to the state convention, the Leavenworth Advocate published several concerns the Salina delegates addressed in Topeka, specifically, discrimination in employment against blacks. The adopted party platform, while including planks for education and child labor reform, did not speak to the civil rights of blacks nor violence perpetrated against blacks.<sup>90</sup>

When the time came to determine the state ticket, the auditor-designee was the only contested position. Even though Waller was a leading contender, the convention chose a white farmer, C. M. Hovey, as the party's candidate. An anti-black faction, pressure from farmer delegates, and overconfidence from the party's victories in the past election were likely factors that contributed to Waller's defeat.<sup>91</sup> In other words, the Republicans did not need to court the black vote to ensure victory at the polls.<sup>92</sup>

In response, the Leavenworth Advocate editors, who worked tirelessly on behalf of Waller, criticized the outcome at the Topeka convention. The paper reported that many of the black delegates "from the various counties who

came to boom Waller, went home sore."<sup>93</sup> "The defeat is a bitter one to the gallant colored Republicans," stated the Advocate, "but we ask our people to be considerate and as temperate as possible under the circumstances."<sup>94</sup> Considering the Populist Party was "bidding for the colored vote," Townsend predicted the Republican Party might come to regret its decision.<sup>95</sup>

The Advocate, however, did not waver in its support of the party, but clung to the hope that the Republicans were the better party for African Americans. The editors saw some reason for optimism. Despite Waller's defeat at Topeka, black Republicans had demonstrated the ability to overcome internal conflicts and work together toward achieving an overriding goal, the unanimous nomination of Waller.<sup>96</sup>

One of the key players in the effort to get Waller nominated was Blanche Ketene Bruce, associate editor of the Leavenworth Advocate. When the 1892 election campaign began, Bruce decided to run for a state elective office. His experiences as a journalist, his commitment to education, and his connections through the black press formed a solid foundation for his campaign.<sup>97</sup> Bruce's skill as an orator made him a popular speaker at various community functions, including Emancipation Day

celebrations, church conventions, political meetings, and benefit programs for black newspapers.<sup>98</sup> The Leavenworth educator was nephew and namesake of Blanche Kelso Bruce, the black Republican U. S. senator from Mississippi during Reconstruction.<sup>99</sup>

While the elder Bruce was familiar to Kansas blacks, it was the younger Bruce's association with the *Advocate* and editor Townsend that helped most to open doors to political opportunities. Townsend was well respected among Republicans and often assumed leadership roles at the state conventions.<sup>100</sup> As Townsend's ally, Bruce had demonstrated consistent loyalty to the Republican cause. In its endorsement for Bruce, the *Atchison Blade* wrote:

We might mention specially B. K. Bruce, Jr., who has a reputation of being one of the leading educators and political champions of Kansas. During the uncertain times of Republicanism Mr. Bruce stood by his party, and never swerved from the line of direct interest of his race.<sup>101</sup>

Early in the campaign, Bruce enjoyed the support of most of the state's black press and even of several white newspapers.<sup>102</sup> According to C. H. J. Taylor of the *American Citizen*, Bruce was the best candidate for the job, whether black or white, and the Republican Party would make a major tactical error among the black electorate if he was not nominated for the position. "Mr. Bruce ought not to be held

back because he is colored," Taylor argued. "[T]he voice of nearly twenty-thousand Negro votes of the state asks that the convention shall elect him."<sup>103</sup>

Another political independent, journalist D. L. Roberson of Wichita, expressed concern that infighting among blacks could hinder the election of Bruce. Roberson cautioned Republican black papers to temper attacks against the growing number of African Americans taking an independent stance.<sup>104</sup> "The independent vote will serve as an important factor, in deciding the result, for whoever may be chosen," Roberson wrote in a letter to the editor in the *Times-Observer* of Topeka. "The fifteen thousand Negro votes of the state is the key to the situation, if well organized and will move in a body when the word is given."<sup>105</sup>

Bruce, a political conservative, initially chose to run for the secretary of state nomination. When the roster for the state ticket was released, apparently some were astounded to find Bruce slated to run as state auditor, the position sought by Waller two years earlier.<sup>106</sup>

Correspondent "Fearless" editorialized the following:

The selection of Mr. Bruce was quite a surprise to many of our people here and seemed to be a hard pill for some to swallow. But with the race's best interests at heart, every Afro-American vote in Kansas will be cast for the party and Bruce.<sup>107</sup>

Although Bruce had sought the secretary of state position, he welcomed the candidacy for state auditor. The Atchison *Blade*, one of Bruce's staunchest supporters, credited Townsend in getting the nomination for Bruce.<sup>108</sup>

Following his nomination, support for Bruce by some of the black press waned. When word came out that Bruce's uncle was coming to Kansas "to teach the Negroes of this state their political duty," political independents protested his arrival.<sup>109</sup> C. H. J. Taylor published an open letter to Bruce in the *American Citizen*, urging him to tell the elder Bruce to forego the trip to the Sunflower State.<sup>110</sup> Kansans did not want to live under the shadow of the national politician. The battle was in Kansas and needed to be fought by blacks in Kansas.

According to Taylor, Bruce's campaign style of self-promotion was alienating some black and white voters. The *American Citizen* editor alleged that Bruce had made an error in the tone of his campaign literature. Bruce had distributed a circular touting himself as "the only college graduate on the ticket," conveying an elitism that "Kansans will not take kindly to."<sup>111</sup> His campaign rhetoric could cause dissension among less-educated voters. Bruce would be better served to promote himself as "a plain citizen with

sufficient ability to discharge the duties of the office of Auditor," Taylor advised.<sup>112</sup>

Bruce's campaigning disclosed a degree of class-consciousness. As a member of the black elite of Leavenworth, he valued his college education and family ties to the black aristocracy of the nation's capitol city.<sup>113</sup> Two uncles held government positions in Washington, D.C., in the early 1890s.<sup>114</sup> Education and ancestry were among the criteria that distinguished upper-class blacks from the masses in the late-nineteenth century.<sup>115</sup>

With Populists attracting black voters and gaining momentum, Bruce needed the votes of blacks and whites if he was going to win. By emphasizing class distinctions, Bruce risked distancing himself from members of the lower classes, which made up the majority of blacks living in Kansas.<sup>116</sup> Apparently, Bruce took some of his journalistic colleague's advice to heart. Ex-Senator Bruce did not make a trip to Kansas on behalf of his nephew, and the younger Bruce appealed to blacks that his competency, rather than race, merited their votes.<sup>117</sup>

On Election Day, the entire Populist state ticket was victorious. Black candidates did not fare well on the state level. The Populist opponent for auditor soundly defeated Bruce, who failed to carry his home county.<sup>118</sup> Taylor, who

ran as the legislative fusion candidate from Wyandotte County, also lost.<sup>119</sup> Some attributed the defeats to lack of solidarity among black voters. "Negroes 'knifed' C. H. J. Taylor and also B. K. Bruce," charged the *Atchison Blade*. "Negroes are enemies to themselves."<sup>120</sup>

Even though Bruce lost the election, he managed to salvage some self-recognition and status among white and black political circles.<sup>121</sup> Running for political office helped expand Bruce's sphere of influence beyond northeast Kansas. Bruce no longer lived under his mentor and colleague Townsend's political shadow. He ranked among the few black political candidates who managed to win a place on the state ticket. In spite of his defeat, Bruce boasted that he had drawn more votes than any previous black candidate.<sup>122</sup>

In comparing the campaigns of Waller and Bruce, some similarities become apparent. Both office seekers had political ambitions, although the evidence surrounding the elections suggests differences in their campaign styles. Nearly ten years older and with more political experience, Waller better gauged his constituency and tempered his approach to enlist the support of black Republicans and independents. Bruce's focus on self-promotion triggered opposition from some black political leaders. As political

candidates, both men understood the value of their associations with the press. Not only did they extend their sphere of influence through the circulation of the newspapers, but they also benefited from the support and organizational strengths of several colleagues, particularly W. B. Townsend.

Several factors beyond their control, however, affected the outcome of the elections. Even though Waller enjoyed unified support among blacks Republicans, he and his backers could not penetrate the white-dominated party. Waller's civil rights advocacy may have alienated him from some white party leaders. In the 1880s, Waller had litigated several cases regarding civil rights that challenged discriminatory practices, and he had worked to break down the barriers that prevented blacks from joining the militia.<sup>123</sup>

Bruce, on the other hand, took advantage of opportunities that developed after the 1890 election. After the Populist victories, as a growing number of blacks abandoned the Republicans, that party became willing to include an African American on the ticket to attract black voters. However, Bruce may have lost some black votes because of his elitism, which was roundly criticized by the *American Citizen*. In all likelihood, Bruce was a political

casualty of the Populist momentum that swept the state ticket.

Despite political defeats by Waller and Bruce, the newspaper network of Kansas prodded black citizenry to exercise their suffrage rights as informed voters. As one Wichita paper reminded its readers, having the right to vote entailed responsibility:

If there ever was a time when it was necessary for our people to exercise the rights of suffrage, it will be next week. . . . Consider the present crisis through which we are now passing. The stagnation of business; the closing down of factories; the sufferings of thousands of honest laborers who are thrown out of employment, and this I think, will enable you to decide for yourself as to how and for whom to vote.<sup>124</sup>

#### Quest for Political Influence

The Kansas story of African Americans' dogged determination to achieve influence and patronage through the political system rode the waves of optimism and the troughs of despair during the late-nineteenth century. As the end of the final decade of the century neared, voter disillusionment became ever more apparent.

Newspapers provided an outlet for the growing frustration. Such Republican Party loyalists as J. Monroe Dorsey of the *Parsons Weekly Blade* questioned the value of remaining in a party where apathy and prejudice toward blacks were commonplace, and political crumbs did little to

satisfy expectations. Following Parsons' municipal spring election of 1897, the *Parsons Weekly Blade* cited evidence that Republican voters had marked all but the name of the black candidate on the ticket.<sup>125</sup> Editor Dorsey believed white Republicans had sabotaged black candidates on the ticket in that election, as well as those of previous years. Under the headline "Republicans v. Negroes," Dorsey wrote: "We are forced to the conclusion that Republicans of Parsons, whose skin is bleached, are teeth and toe-nail agin [sic] the Negro."<sup>126</sup>

S. W. Jones of the *National Reflector* in Wichita echoed Dorsey's sentiments. He charged that Republicans practiced prejudice and ingratitude by granting meager appointments, such as janitor jobs, to African Americans. "[S]uch political clap-trap no longer interests the colored voters of Kansas," Jones wrote.<sup>127</sup> Disenchanted, many of the journalists of Kansas's black newspapers had come to view political affiliations and "petty office seeking" as secondary to racial pride and race advancement.<sup>128</sup>

Notes

<sup>1</sup>Rashey B. Moten, Jr., "The Negro Press of Kansas" (Master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1938), 54-55.

<sup>2</sup>*Negro Population, 1790-1915*, United States Bureau of the Census (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918), 418.

<sup>3</sup>Dorothy V. Smith, "The Black Press and the Search for Hope and Equality in Kansas, 1865-1985," in *The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865-1985*, ed. Henry Lewis Suggs (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 108.

<sup>4</sup>Smith, 108; Moten, 54-55.

<sup>5</sup>Smith, 108.

<sup>6</sup>Moten, 16-17.

<sup>7</sup>Based on extant holdings at the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka, the life span of black newspapers in Kansas averaged less than two years during the late-nineteenth century. Some, such as *Kansas Headlight*, lasted for several weeks, while the *American Citizen* continued publishing for fifteen years.

<sup>8</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 22 July 1892.

<sup>9</sup>William H. Chafe, "The Negro and Populism: A Kansas Case Study," *The Journal of Southern History* 34, no. 3 (August 1968): 402-419.

<sup>10</sup>Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Black Power U.S.A.: The Human Side of Reconstruction, 1867-1877* (Baltimore, MD: Johnson Publishing Co., 1967; Paperback, Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1967), 96-98.

<sup>11</sup>Bernell E. Tripp, "The Media and Community Cohesiveness," *The Significance of the Media in American History*, in James D. Startt and Wm. David Sloan, 147-167 (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 1994).

<sup>12</sup>Special correspondent Dennis Thompson reminded readers that one of the reasons for sustaining black

newspapers was putting issues before the public (Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 3 February 1894).

<sup>13</sup>Martin E. Dann, ed., *The Black Press, 1827-1890: The Quest for National Identity* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 121.

<sup>14</sup>Chafe, 405. By 1890, a majority of the black population lived in cities with more than 2,500.

<sup>15</sup>Thomas C. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka, Kansas, 1865-1915: A Social History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 122-23. Edward P. McCabe migrated from Chicago to Kansas in the late 1870s, eventually settling in Nicodemus, an all-black town in northwestern Kansas. Later, McCabe co-founded Langston City and Liberty, Oklahoma. See Kenneth Marvin, *Black Towns and Profit: Promotion and Development in the Trans-Appalachian West, 1877-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

<sup>16</sup>Marie Deacon, "Kansas as the Promised Land: The View of the Black Press, 1890-1900," (Master's thesis, University of Arkansas, 1973), 24; Chafe, 405.

<sup>17</sup>*Southern Argus*, 25 June 1891.

<sup>18</sup>Randall B. Woods, *A Black Odyssey: John Lewis Waller and the Promise of American Life, 1878-1900* (Lawrence, KS: Regents of Kansas Press, 1981), xv. According to Woods, prospects of attaining wealth and exercising political power attracted black lawyers, teachers, and journalists to Kansas in the 1870s and 1880s. Economic and social factors also drew migrants to Kansas.

<sup>19</sup>Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 16.

<sup>20</sup>Deacon, 24; Chafe, 402-419; Cox, 120.

<sup>21</sup>The term "appointive plum" symbolized the political appointment given as a reward to representative black leaders, in recognition of campaign efforts by blacks for the party. National appointments were particularly desirable and prestigious. In 1889, a number of African Americans in Kansas endorsed John L. Waller as the Administration's choice for minister to Haiti (*Leavenworth Advocate*, 4 May 1889; 11 May 1889). President Benjamin

Harrison decided to give the assignment to Frederick Douglass. Prior to that decision, a cartoon in the *Indianapolis Freeman* depicted Harrison, dressed in the garb of a Roman emperor, tossing the plum of the "Haytian Mission" to Douglass, who stood in a boat en route to Haiti. Other blacks watched as the token fruit bypassed their outstretched arms. The caption read: "Frederick gets the 'Plum' while the Score of other Applicants Must Look for Something Else" (*Indianapolis Freeman*, 6 April 1889).

One Kansas paper noted the unpredictability regarding appointments to blacks: "In the mad scramble for office it's always the most unsuspecting fellow that is successful in snatching the appointive plum. When hopes are highest on one side of the fence that is the time the tide turns in the fellow's favor on the other side of the fence. Political affairs are hard to understand anyhow" (*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 23 January 1897).

<sup>22</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 29 June 1889.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 21 September 1889. Republican Governor Humphrey originally appointed John L. Waller as steward, or "head waiter," at the Osawatomie insane asylum. Because of the poor working conditions, Waller applied for and received a transfer to the state school for the blind in Kansas City (*Leavenworth Advocate*, 7 September 1889; 21 September 1889; Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 103).

<sup>24</sup>" *Ibid.*, 29 December 1894.

<sup>25</sup>*American Citizen*, 25 January 1895. Bruce declined the job, explaining that working in Topeka would be difficult due to the birth of his daughter.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 1 February 1895.

<sup>27</sup>Moten, 25.

<sup>28</sup>Chafe, 402-419.

<sup>29</sup>*Kansas Blackman*, 20 April 1894.

<sup>30</sup>*People's Friend*, 31 May 1894. William Jeltz established a Republican newspaper in Wichita after working for several months with his brother, Fred Jeltz, at the *Kansas State Ledger* in Topeka. In reference to Will's

choice of "The People's Friend" for his paper, Fred Jeltz noted that "while the name is, in it's [sic] sound, a little populistic, yet it seems to be true republican." The *Ledger* editor advised: "Show your colors, young man, and take away the chestnut 'People's'" during the upcoming campaign (*Kansas State Ledger*, 13 July 1894).

<sup>31</sup>*American Citizen*, Topeka, 23 February 1888.

<sup>32</sup>*Times-Observer*, Topeka, 4 September 1891.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 4 September 1891.

<sup>34</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 18 August 1888.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 17 August 1889.

<sup>36</sup>For an overview of Taylor's political activities in Kansas, see Randall B. Woods, "C. H. J. Taylor and the Movement for Black Political Independence, 1882-1896," *Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 122-135.

<sup>37</sup>Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 100.

<sup>38</sup>*American Citizen*, 26 July 1889; 9 August 1889; 20 February 1891. Taylor's political stance was compatible with the nonpartisanship of the *American Citizen*. George A. Dudley bought the *Citizen* from John L. Waller in 1888. The paper caused quite a stir among black Republicans when the management renounced its former alliance with the Republican Party.

<sup>39</sup>Deacon, 38.

<sup>40</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 24 March 1893. Fred Jeltz chose to support the party he believed most benefited blacks. For a brief time he gave his allegiance to the Populists (*Kansas State Ledger*, 28 July 1893; 11 August 1893).

<sup>41</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 12 May 1894.

<sup>42</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 21 June 1890; O. Gene Clanton, *Kansas Populism: Ideas and Men* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1969), 56.

<sup>43</sup>Chafe, 402-419.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 404. Chafe argued that Populism appealed to blacks and whites for different reasons. Whites turned to Populism as a way to achieve upward mobility, while blacks sought security of status.

<sup>45</sup>Cox, 127.

<sup>46</sup>Leavenworth Advocate, 30 August 1890; Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 101.

<sup>47</sup>In 1886, Democrats attempted to attract blacks to the party by nominating for auditor a black candidate, William D. Kelley of Leavenworth. See Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 84.

<sup>48</sup>In primary sources, McCabe generally was listed as "E. P. McCabe," although *Men of Mark* made a reference to him as "Edwin P. McCabe" in a speech by W. B. Townsend (p. 1057). Some secondary sources give his name as "Edwin P. McCabe," while others identify him as "Edward P. McCabe." See William J. Simmons, *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising* (Cleveland: George Rewell and Co., 1887; reprint, New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1968), 1055-1058; *American Citizen*, 1 April 1892; *The Plaindealer*, Topeka, 3 February 1899; *The Colored American Republican Text Book* (The Colored American Publishing Company, 1899), 11; Cox, 42, 104, 122, 123, 191; Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the West, 1528-1990* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 129, 140, 143-146; Nudie E. Williams, "Black Newspapers and the Exodusters" (Unpublished diss., Oklahoma State University, 1977), 81; Monroe Lee Billington and Roger D. Hardaway, eds., *African Americans on the Western Frontier* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1998), 136, 150-151, 249-250; Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 52-53, 63, 84, 89-90, 94-95.

<sup>49</sup>Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 119; Chafe, 409.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>51</sup>Walter T. K. Nugent, *The Tolerant Populist: Kansas Populism and Nativism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 121, 126. Statewide in 1890, Populists won 324 offices to 71 positions by the Republicans.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 144. The Populists had organized nationally as a party in Omaha in 1892. In Kansas, Democratic and Populists ran fusion candidates in the 1892 election.

<sup>53</sup>*American Citizen*, 19 May 1893. Dana Adams of Salina was en route to prison after being convicted and sentenced for attempted murder when a mob accosted and lynched him. A group of blacks met in Topeka and adopted a resolution to bring before Governor Lewelling. After meeting with them, Lewelling offered a reward for \$800 for the arrest and conviction of those who conducted the lynching. No record of ever given of an arrest.

<sup>54</sup>The term "Pop" was often used in reference to the Populist Party.

<sup>55</sup>*Kansas Headlight*, 24 August 1894.

<sup>56</sup>During the mid-1890s, Bettis was associated with several fledgling newspapers in Wichita, including the *Standard* in 1895 and the *Tribune* in 1897.

<sup>57</sup>*People's Friend*, 21 September 1894.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 24 August 1894.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 7 September 1894.

<sup>60</sup>*Kansas Headlight*, 14 September 1894.

<sup>61</sup>*People's Friend*, 28 September 1894.

<sup>62</sup>*National Baptist World*, 21 September 1894. No specific reason was given for Roberson's leaving Wichita, but he may have left to avoid lawsuits filed by the printers to collect their pay (*People's Friend*, 28 September 1894).

<sup>63</sup>*People's Friend*, 28 September 1894.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 28 September 1894. Ironically, the *People's Friend* published its last paper in Wichita. Jeltz apparently had not received money from the Republicans, either.

<sup>65</sup>*National Baptist World*, 28 September 1894.

<sup>66</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 6 October 1894.

<sup>67</sup>*American Citizen*, 19 October 1894.

<sup>68</sup>*National Baptist World*, 26 October 1894.

<sup>69</sup>In 1897, W. A. Bettis joined the staff of the *National Reflector* of Wichita, edited by S. W. Jones.

<sup>70</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 11 January 1895. In 1893, two other young black women, Zephra Orey and Nellie Jamison, were enrolling clerks for the Populist legislature (*Kansas State Ledger*, 31 March 1893).

<sup>71</sup>Cox, 127; *Atchison Blade*, 10 September 1892; *Kansas State Ledger*, 25 August 1893; *American Citizen*, 11 May 1894. Lutie A. Lytle moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where she taught school before studying law in Nashville at Central Tennessee College, a black college. After graduating with her degree in 1897, she joined the faculty of the college and later returned to Topeka to practice law. According to Lytle, her decision to study law was prompted after reading the newspaper exchanges while working for the various newspapers. In the papers she read about African Americans who were victims of "legal ignorance" and decided to make the law her profession. See *Leavenworth Herald*, 2 October 1897; 16 October 1897; "Black Historic Sites: A Beginning Point," in *Historic Preservation in Kansas: Historic Sites Survey* (Topeka, KS: Kansas State Historical Society, September 1977), 31.

<sup>72</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 19 January 1895.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 19 January 1895.

<sup>74</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 16 March 1889; *Atchison Blade*, 3 September 1892; *Leavenworth Herald*, 1 September 1894; *National Reflector*, 20 February 1897.

<sup>75</sup>Prior to heading the *American Citizen*, C. H. J. Taylor was appointed minister to Liberia in 1887. In 1894, President Cleveland offered him the post of register of deeds, a position previously held by B. K. Bruce, former senator from Mississippi. John L. Waller, associated with

the *Western Recorder* in Lawrence, the *Leavenworth Advocate*, and the *American Citizen*, both in Topeka and Kansas City, accepted the position of consul to Madagascar in 1891 under the Harrison administration.

<sup>76</sup> Among those who sought state office were John L. Waller, who had connections with several papers, and B. K. Bruce of the *Leavenworth Advocate* and *Herald*. On the municipal level, F. L. Jeltz of the *Kansas State Ledger* ran for justice of the peace; E. W. Dorsey and S. O. Clayton of the *Parsons Weekly Blade*, ran for police judge and constable, respectively; and S. W. Jones, associated with several Wichita papers, was elected constable. C. H. J. Taylor of the *American Citizen* and W. B. Townsend of the *Leavenworth Advocate* received appointive position as deputy city attorneys in Kansas City and Leavenworth, respectively.

<sup>77</sup> *Leavenworth Advocate*, 21 June 1890.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 July 1890.

<sup>80</sup> *Leavenworth Advocate*, 26 July 1890. The signers included the following: W. B. Townsend, B. K. Bruce, and J. H. Childers (correspondent "Fearless") of the *Advocate*; W. T. McGuinn, W. J. Johnson, and E. M. Woods of the *American Citizen*; John L. Waller, who had worked for both the *Advocate* and the *Citizen*; and D. L. Roberson, former editor of the *Wichita Globe*.

<sup>81</sup> "A CALL FOR A STATE CONVENTION OF LEADING COLORED MEN," *Leavenworth Advocate*, 19 July 1890; Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 104-106.

<sup>82</sup> *Leavenworth Advocate*, 19 July 1890; 26 July 1890.

<sup>83</sup> Both papers, which claimed to "voice the sentiments of the 12,000 Negro voters in Kansas," had publicly pledged their support for Waller, though they stated they would back another candidate chosen by the delegates (*Leavenworth Advocate*, 5 July 1890).

<sup>84</sup> Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 83-109.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 102-103. In 1889, Townsend and Bruce had pushed for the appointment of Waller as minister to Haiti by President Benjamin Harrison, an appointment eventually given to Frederick Douglass. However, the state Board of Charities appointed Waller to a position at the Osawatomie insane asylum. He later transferred to an asylum for the blind in Kansas City. However, Waller encountered discrimination and inadequate working conditions at both positions. He was eager to gain a more prominent position as an elected official. See *Leavenworth Advocate*, 4 May 1889; 15 June 1889; 7 September 1889; 21 September 1889.

<sup>86</sup>"The Convention," *Leavenworth Advocate*, 16 August 1890.

<sup>87</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 19 July 1890; 26 July 1890; 16 August 1890; Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 105.

<sup>88</sup>The editors of the *Leavenworth Advocate* and the *American Citizen* took the initiative of organizing the convention, including relaying information, contacting delegates, and overseeing arrangements for the meeting ("The Convention," *Leavenworth Advocate*, 16 August 1890).

<sup>89</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 16 August 1890. Delegates with press associations included the following: E. W. Dorsey of Labette County; James Back of Wabaunsee County, B. K. Bruce, W. B. Townsend and J. H. Glass of Leavenworth County; D. L. Robinson \*\*[Roberson] and S. W. Jones of Sedgwick County; S. G. Watkins of Shawnee County; George A. Dudley, W. T. McGuinn, P. H. Bray, Henry F. Johnson, and J. L. Waller of Wyandotte County.

\*\*According to the *Leavenworth Herald*, 26 June 1897, D. L. Robinson also went by D. L. Roberson. The paper referred to him as a "wandering newspaperman from any old place, . . . of the Will Jeltz and John Homer Howlett class." Jeltz and Howlett were associated with several newspapers in various locations, but neither man stayed in one place for any length of time.

<sup>90</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 16 August 1890; Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 106.

<sup>91</sup>Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 106-107.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>93</sup>Leavenworth Advocate, 13 September 1890.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 6 September 1890.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>In 1891, Waller received word that President Benjamin Harrison had appointed him as consul to Madagascar, an island colony off the coast of East Africa. The Administration's motivation in appointing Waller was to attract the political support of blacks; nonetheless, the black press praised Waller's appointment and claimed his national recognition as a credit for the entire race. In 1894, Waller resigned from his position, following the election of Grover Cleveland. After his resignation, Waller decided to remain in Madagascar and pursue a land development project as a colony for emigrating blacks from the United States. However, after several months Waller was arrested and imprisoned by the French government, charged with being a spy. In the United States, the black press, as well as the white press, repeatedly petitioned the Cleveland administration about the "Waller Affair." Finally, under pressure from the U. S. government, the French released Waller, and he returned to Kansas. See Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 119-179.

<sup>97</sup>American Citizen, 1 April 1892; 20 May 1892. After graduating from the University of Kansas in 1885, Bruce assumed a position at South Leavenworth School as principal. Bruce was one of few black teachers with state teaching certification.

<sup>98</sup>Leavenworth Advocate, 9 August 1890; 31 May 1890; Kansas State Ledger, 29 July 1892; Atchison Blade, 27 August 1892.

<sup>99</sup>"Jr." was often tacked on the name of B. K. Bruce of Leavenworth to distinguish him from his uncle. Because Bruce and his uncle shared the same name, confusion sometimes resulted as to who was who, a mistake the younger Bruce appeared to appreciate. On one occasion, the Leavenworth Advocate ran a notice about Bruce and several other local black businessmen who served as board of directors for the Eureka Building Loan & Investment Association in Leavenworth (Leavenworth Advocate, 13 April

1889). The following week, the *Advocate* reprinted an excerpt from the *Indianapolis Freeman*, which reported that a "syndicate of prominent colored men" had been formed in Washington, D.C., which handled real estate and loans. Because "B. K. Bruce" was listed in the notice, the *Freeman* had assumed the enterprise was located in the nation's capital. The *Advocate* corrected the *Freeman* editor by writing: "The above syndicate is not in Washington D.C., but is a Leavenworth concern. The 'Freeman' must have got mixed on the name B. K. Bruce, who lives in Washington D.C. We have a B. K. Bruce out here who is principal in one of our schools and who is a nephew of the ex-Senator" (*Leavenworth Advocate*, 20 April 1889).

<sup>100</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 13 September 1890; *Leavenworth Herald*, 16 June 1894; 7 March 1896.

<sup>101</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 23 July 1892.

<sup>102</sup>*American Citizen*, 27 May 1892; *Atchison Blade*, 27 August 1892. Of the seven black newspapers publishing, all but the *American Citizen* had pledged full support to Bruce.

<sup>103</sup>*American Citizen*, 20 May 1892. Taylor's estimate of the number of black voters may have been inflated. See Chafe, 409-410.

<sup>104</sup>D. L. Roberson separated himself from the Republican Party for several years. In 1894, Roberson joined W. A. Bettis in editing the short-run *Kansas Headlight*, a Populist newspaper in Wichita.

<sup>105</sup>*Times-Observer*, 6 February 1892.

<sup>106</sup>Townsend nominated Bruce at the convention (*Atchison Blade*, 23 July 1892).

<sup>107</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 6 August 1892. While the editors of the *Atchison Blade* pledged full support for Bruce's candidacy, correspondent "Fearless" remained tentative in his *Blade* columns. In the late-nineteenth century, black newspapers often published differing opinions, a marked change from the earlier black publications. Other than letters to the editors, black newspapers prior to the Civil War rarely published editorials or correspondence that contradicted the stance of the editor.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 12 August 1892; 27 August 1892. Part of the Blade support of Bruce may have been tied to one of the co-owners, Will Harris, who had worked with Bruce for several years at the Leavenworth Advocate.

<sup>109</sup>American Citizen, 12 August 1892.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 12 August 1892. Former Kansas journalist Bill Eagleson of The Langston (Okla.) Herald also criticized Bruce's campaign style: "Mr. Bruce has lost his personal identity for the present, and is now a representative of the race; let him depart himself as such and not act the fool" (Exchange excerpt in American Citizen, 9 September 1892).

<sup>113</sup>Ex-Senator B. K. Bruce had served as register to the treasury in 1881 and managed to receive successive appointments in Washington, D.C. His elder brother, H. C. Bruce, worked as a clerk in the Post Office Department and also landed a post in the Pension Office in the Department of the Interior, due to the influence of B. K. Bruce. See introduction in Willard B. Gatewood Jr., *The New Man: Twenty-nine Years a Slave, Twenty-nine Years a Freeman: Recollections of H. C. Bruce* (Originally published: York, PA: P. Anstandt, 1895; Reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), xii.

<sup>114</sup>B. K. Bruce Jr. appeared to reflect the ideology of his uncle H. C. Bruce. In his autobiography, the elder Bruce sought to explain class hierarchy among African Americans, which he asserted evidenced itself during slavery. According to Bruce, those blacks who progressed in society had "superior blood," while those who remained on the lower social tier had "inferior blood." See H. C. Bruce, *New Man*, 36-38.

<sup>115</sup>For a thorough analysis of the black elite, see Willard B. Gatewood Jr., *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite of 1880-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

<sup>116</sup>Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 78. In cities, most blacks worked jobs that required unskilled or semi-skilled labor.

<sup>117</sup>Atchison *Blade*, 5 November 1892.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 12 November 1892. Generally, Leavenworth County voted for Democratic candidates.

<sup>119</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 18 November 1892. In addition to governor-elect Lorenzo Lewelling, the state ticket included offices of lieutenant governor, associate justice, secretary of state, attorney general, state auditor, state treasurer, and state superintendent. C. H. J. Taylor's run for the state legislature was his second unsuccessful attempt. He previously campaigned and lost in 1890 (Woods, "C. H. J. Taylor," 129).

<sup>120</sup>Atchison *Blade*, 12 November 1892. Because he was nominated for auditor at the last minute, Bruce speculated that he had alienated white Republicans who supported the incumbent auditor at the state convention, C. H. Hovey (*Kansas State Ledger*, 18 November 1892).

<sup>121</sup>In 1894 Bruce made another, though unsuccessful, run for the Republican state auditor nominee position. After the general election, the elect-secretary of state appointed Bruce as office clerk to reward him for promoting the Republicans' cause, but Bruce declined the offer (*The People's Friend*, 31 May 1894; *Leavenworth Herald*, 29 December 1894). He decided to focus his energies on teaching and running the *Leavenworth Herald*, founded in 1894. According to the paper's salutatory or prospectus, the *Herald* was a "staunch Republican paper," giving its support to the party that had done more for "those who are struggling for life in the great scale of existence" than either the Democratic or Populist parties ("Introductory," *Leavenworth Herald*, 17 February 1894).

<sup>122</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 2 November 1895.

<sup>123</sup>Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 73.

<sup>124</sup>*National Baptist World*, 2 November 1894.

<sup>125</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 10 April 1897.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid.

<sup>127</sup>*National Reflector*, 18 September 1897.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., 7 August 1897.

CHAPTER 5  
PROTEST AGAINST DISCRIMINATORY BACKLASH

During the summer of 1889, editor W. B. Townsend of the Leavenworth Advocate traveled by train to Mississippi to visit his father, whom he had not seen for twenty-five years. Townsend, who departed from Kansas City, traveled through Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana on his month-long journey.<sup>1</sup> In the Advocate, Townsend reported that, when leaving St. Louis, "although holding a first class ticket, we were driven by a rough and insulting brakeman from the first class coach, to a coach which is generally known in the South as, 'Coon car; or 'special car for colored persons.'"<sup>2</sup> The separate-car arrangement made no sense to Townsend, particularly when "we had the good fortune of one time during our trip, to have one of those 'special cars' entirely at our disposal for twelve hours."<sup>3</sup>

Upon returning to Leavenworth, Townsend offered advice for Advocate readers who might choose to venture southward. He issued the following caution:

When colored ladies and gentlemen go South, they need not spend their money for first class tickets; for they will be compelled to ride in what is known as the 'coon car' and sit in waiting-rooms in depots with signs over their doors, which read thus: For colored people.<sup>4</sup>

Townsend's episode was typical for African Americans who journeyed by train through the South during the late-nineteenth century. However, the degradation of racial discrimination, ranging from segregation and exclusion to violence and lynching, was not restricted to Southern states. The rise of virulent racism touched the individual and collective lives of most African Americans in Kansas, even though they encountered less rigidity than Southern blacks.

This chapter examines how the press enabled African Americans living in Kansas to access information about the civil rights that affected their day-to-day lives and the broader black community. While blacks found life more tolerable in the Sunflower State compared to the South, they had no guarantees for protection, safety, and due process. Racial inequities were part of everyday life.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, black readers relied on newspapers for reports of discrimination against citizens who had to patronize white-owned businesses, use public facilities, and appear in court. The newspapers protested against racial injustices and offered possible avenues of recourse and resistance to their readers. Thus, the press enabled black communities in Kansas to combat the prejudice and discrimination that pervaded American society. In carrying out its role, press coverage encompassed local

discriminatory incidents, inequities faced by the larger black community, and the rising number of black lynchings.

According to one Kansas editor, black newspapers, as part of the public press, provided not only an avenue of expression for African Americans, but also a way to reason with whites.<sup>6</sup> White politicians, journalists, and community leaders, in addition to business owners, while often unsympathetic to the plight of blacks, occasionally read black newspapers.<sup>7</sup> Having words in print empowered black leaders to "speak" to the majority of society, as well as expand their black audience.<sup>8</sup>

#### Appropriation of Civil Rights

During Reconstruction, even as boundaries for racial separation were being drawn in schools and social institutions, such as churches and fraternal orders, African Americans were optimistic about their gains toward attaining full citizenship. Ratification of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments after the Civil War established civil rights for African Americans in the South and the North. These amendments abolished slavery, enacted suffrage for black men, and promised due process and equal protection under the law. Beginning in 1866, the federal government also passed a series of laws that spelled out specific civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution for all races, among them being the rights to sue and be sued,

to give evidence, to own property, and to access public facilities and conveyances.<sup>9</sup>

However, action by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1883 overruled much of the progress achieved previously. That year the Supreme Court heard five cases testing the constitutionality of the Civil Rights Act of 1875. The cases dealt with blacks' rights for access to public accommodations, such as hotels, theaters, and a railroad company.<sup>10</sup> The Court determined that equal access to privately owned public accommodations was not among those legal rights protected under the Constitution, thus invalidating the 1875 act.<sup>11</sup>

Responses by black newspapers to the Supreme Court ruling ranged from guarded optimism to outrage.<sup>12</sup> The *People's Advocate* in Washington, D.C., editorialized that the decision would not stop "the march of progress" toward racial equality.<sup>13</sup> In the columns of the *New York Globe*, journalist T. Thomas Fortune expressed the frustration felt by many after hearing news of the Court's ruling. Fortune wrote:

Having declared that colored men have no protection from the government in their political rights, the Supreme Court now declares that we have no civil rights--declares that railroad corporations are free to force us into smoking cars or cattle cars . . . [W]e are declared equal, and entitled to certain rights . . . but there is no law to protect us in the enjoyment of them. We are aliens in our own land; we are denied an equal measure of that protection which

flows from citizenship and which is denied to no other class of American citizens.<sup>14</sup>

Like many black leaders, Fortune recognized the long-term implication of the Court's decision, opening a door for legalized segregation that reinforced second-class citizenship for black Americans.

After the ruling, states were "left free to make such regulations for transportation of passengers as they saw fit, so long as they did not violate State laws and so long as the State laws did not violate the federal laws."<sup>15</sup> By 1895, seventeen Northern states had passed civil rights statutes, but those laws rarely were enforced.<sup>16</sup> Thus, African Americans in the North, as well as the South, faced severe prejudice and discrimination.<sup>17</sup>

In Kansas, the roots of civil rights for African Americans can be traced to events prior to the Civil War, specifically the opening of the Kansas Territory for settlement in 1854. After the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act by the U.S. Congress on 30 May 1854, resolving the slavery question in Kansas was left to those who drafted the state constitution.<sup>18</sup> Proslavery supporters from Missouri moved across the border to claim the territory, while free-state advocates arrived from New England, prepared to fight for freedom.<sup>19</sup>

The political bent of the state's earliest newspapers reflected the dichotomy over the statehood issue. Leavenworth, a proslavery settlement, became the site of

the territory's first newspaper, the *Kansas Weekly Herald*. Established in September 1854, the paper primarily sought to boost political support for admitting Kansas as a slave state. About a month later in Lawrence, the New England Emigrant Society founded the *Herald of Freedom*, a newspaper that promoted the antislavery position.<sup>20</sup>

Free-state proponents, many supporting the Free Soil movement, eventually won out, and Kansas was admitted to the Union as a free state in 1861. Despite their antislavery stance, the majority of whites who endorsed free statehood were not concerned with the interests or rights of blacks. In fact, most free-soilers believed in the superiority of whites.<sup>21</sup> Adopting the antislavery position served as a means for keeping land open for whites, rather than furthering the abolitionist cause.<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, the final draft of the state constitution, adopted by delegates at the Wyandotte Constitutional Convention in 1859, prohibited slavery but limited the civil rights of African Americans.<sup>23</sup> The constitution specifically granted equality to all "white" men, but denied suffrage, as well as the opportunities to serve in public office and to enlist in the state militia, to African Americans.<sup>24</sup>

In subsequent years, several events altered racial restrictions imposed by the Kansas constitution, expanding to some degree civil rights for blacks. The adoption of the

Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, which superseded the state's jurisdiction, granted voting rights to African Americans. The word "white," however, was not removed from the constitution's suffrage and militia clauses until 1888.<sup>25</sup>

In an attempt to secure rights for blacks, the legislature passed a bill in 1874, primarily prohibiting racial discrimination in public accommodations. The act stipulated that owners and overseers of hotels, boarding houses, places of entertainment, and public conveyances within the state make no "distinction on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude" in providing services.<sup>26</sup> In addition, the statute outlawed exclusion of students from any schools of public instruction because of race.<sup>27</sup> Five years later, however, while requiring integrated secondary schools in all cities, state lawmakers permitted school boards of first-class cities--those with a population of 15,000 or more--to separate black and white children in primary schools.<sup>28</sup>

As one of the earliest civil rights laws passed by a state,<sup>29</sup> the 1874 statute had limited application. Consequently, having the law on the books did not ensure equitable treatment for black citizens of Kansas. Racial attitudes reflected in the state constitution continued to cast a shadow on civil rights in Kansas. African Americans experienced racial discrimination in varying degrees throughout the late-nineteenth century. One black

newspaper, more than a decade after passage of the 1874 law, wrote the following disparaging assessment:

The [civil rights] law remains unchanged, but practically (at present at any rate), it occupies a much useless space on our statnte [sic] books; For we hear the fact boldly asserted every day on the street of every city of any consequence [sic] in the state. That no negro can get a lunch in a restaurant or a dinner in the hotel, nor can he go to this or that school, neither can he get a day's work in the shop no matter whether public or private . . .<sup>30</sup>

The state's black press gave credence to the allegations of discrimination. Based on newspaper coverage, the most common civil rights violations reported by black Kansans occurred in public accommodations of hotels and restaurants. Newspapers regularly reported incidents in cities such as Leavenworth, Topeka, Kansas City, Atchison, and Wichita.<sup>31</sup> After two African-American delegates attending the Republican State Convention in Wichita were told they must eat in the kitchen to receive service at a local restaurant, the *National Reflector* editorialized:

It is the same old story of prejudice which appears to increase among a certain class of lowbred whites in many of our boasting patriotic cities, and we think the time has come when such insults to the race should be legally stopped.<sup>32</sup>

While the Wichita newspaper advocated legal action, litigation did not guarantee redress for ill treatment of African Americans. In 1892, a black customer in Topeka, after receiving discriminatory treatment at an area

restaurant, took the owners to court for violating the plaintiff's rights.<sup>33</sup> At the trial, District Judge John Guthrie of Topeka, a Republican, invalidated the 1874 civil rights law, ruling it unconstitutional.<sup>34</sup> The ruling negated whatever rights blacks assumed they had. "Hurrah for prejudice!" cried one black newspaper, which viewed Guthrie's ruling as "[killing] personal rights of citizens."<sup>35</sup>

Editor F. L. Jeltz conveyed the frustration of many blacks in a somewhat unorthodox form of protest--a poem. The fourth stanza of "Fall Poem" read as follows:

Judge Guthrie thinks he's a very great man,  
He stabs the negro whenever he can,  
He will lose his power with a slam,  
And the black man will not care a d--- straw.<sup>36</sup>

Many black Republicans viewed Guthrie's decision as traitorous, with some deciding to leave the party to join the Populists.<sup>37</sup> Jeltz, however, prodded Kansans, regardless of race, to reject the judge's ruling as the final word on the rights of African Americans in Kansas. "Many contemplate trying the civil rights act over, and if it is not repeated with an effort to win and accomplish by statute what is justly due, it will be weakness on our part," urged the *Ledger*. ". . . If at first you don't succeed, try it again . . . ."<sup>38</sup>

And try, they did. Through the black press, journalists and black political leaders campaigned for a more comprehensive law to uphold the civil rights of African Americans. Several attempts, although unsuccessful, were made to get a new statute on the books to replace the one passed in 1874.

Within six weeks of Guthrie's ruling, former Leavenworth Advocate editor Townsend helped spearhead the first endeavor.<sup>39</sup> As a practicing attorney in his hometown, Townsend exerted his political influence among blacks and whites to repeal the statute. Townsend enlisted the support of fellow Leavenworth attorney Lucien N. Baker, a Republican state senator. Baker, according to one black newspaper, was the only Republican official to acknowledge those among his constituency whose "rights should be respected."<sup>40</sup>

Baker introduced the bill, drafted by Townsend, to Kansas lawmakers in the 1893 legislative session.<sup>41</sup> According to the *Atchison Blade*, the proposed measure did not seek social equality of the races, but "simply justice for the Negro."<sup>42</sup> Yet, despite the efforts of Baker and Townsend to persuade legislators, the bill was not adopted.<sup>43</sup>

Unwilling to accept the outcome, civil rights proponents made another effort to change the law in 1895. By the end of the legislative session, however, the bill had suffered the same fate as the previous attempt--defeat. While a number of black newspapers had backed the proposed legislation, the *American Citizen* hedged its support because Townsend, an outspoken supporter of mixed schools, had authored the bill. "In many respects it appears upon face to be a very commendable measure, but coming as it does from Leavenworth we cannot resist the suspicion that it contains a cunningly devised and premeditated underhand thrust at the separate [sic] schools of the state," wrote the *Citizen*, which favored separate schools.<sup>44</sup> The bill, in fact, included a provision that would amend the 1879 act, by outlawing separate schools in first-class cities.<sup>45</sup>

In 1897, State Representative Henry C. F. Hackbusch, also of Leavenworth, introduced another version of the civil rights bill before the judiciary committee.<sup>46</sup> Even though the Leavenworth *Herald* predicted the bill's passage, the proposed legislation never made it out of committee.<sup>47</sup> Apparently, committee members viewed action on the bill as inconsequential because a similar law already existed on the statute books.<sup>48</sup>

The Leavenworth *Herald* credited the bill's unfavorable outcome, in part, to a lack of support from other black newspapers.<sup>49</sup> Two previous failed attempts to pass such a measure, disagreements over the separate-mixed schools issue, and mounting disillusion about the Republican Party among black voters most likely contributed to the apparently apathetic response of the *Herald*'s journalistic colleagues.<sup>50</sup> One black newspaper expressed despair about the quality of citizenship for African Americans in Kansas. A writer in the *National Reflector* lamented: "We are deprived of our rights[,] then we are told we are a lazy and indolent class of people."<sup>51</sup>

With no legal guarantee for civil rights, readers relied on newspapers to disclose discriminatory incidents that occurred in local and neighboring communities. In addition to covering situations where blacks were refused access to public accommodations, the black press reported discriminatory practices in business and professional settings, as well as in the courts. Coverage usually included facts overlooked or misreported by the white press. At times, the newspapers provided commentary that assessed the situations. Such pertinent knowledge better prepared local and out-of-town readers for potential

situations encountered while conducting business or patronizing establishments in towns and cities throughout the state.

The Leavenworth Advocate detailed an occurrence that involved several blacks from St. Joseph, Missouri, who attended a circus in Leavenworth. Before returning for home, they did some shopping at Murray's Fair, a dry goods store. After they left the store, the white owner called the police, accusing one of the male shoppers of stealing an 8-cent ball of yarn.<sup>52</sup> The Advocate reported that, despite police finding no evidence of guilt, the man was charged with theft and ordered to pay a fine of \$3. A reliable source stated the owner later admitted that he knew the man charged was innocent.<sup>53</sup>

Considering the circumstances that surrounded the incident, the Advocate questioned its readers about the wisdom of trading at Murray's Fair:

Now dear readers, are you going to deal with such a man as that? He had the man prosecuted innocently and he knew it too! Will you swallow [sic] that and continue dealing with him? If so, he might do you the same way.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to coverage of instances where the credibility of a person's word was determined by race, the black press pointed out that African Americans who committed offenses often received harsher punishments than

whites who committed similar offenses. The manager of the Leavenworth Times caught two boys, one black and one white, stealing papers from his office. "We want each and every one of our readers to know just how the colored [boy] was treated," wrote the Advocate, after receiving a report of the incident.<sup>55</sup>

The newspaper manager, a white man, pressed charges against the black boy, but decided to have the white boy released, with a warning. "Why did he not turn them both loose if he intended to do so with one?" questioned the Advocate. "The white boy--as you can see--was as much in fault as the colored lad. It is very natural that he [the manager] would do all in his power to help his own race, but we are all citizens, and are to abide by our own laws."<sup>56</sup> The Advocate urged the newspaper manager to treat all people equally, especially if he intended to solicit "support of the colored people of this vicinity [sic]."<sup>57</sup>

Even in professional settings, a clear distinction was made between blacks and whites. In an incident involving the editors of the *National Reflector*, the paper reported the state fair association's refusal to grant co-editors S. W. Jones and W. A. Bettis press passes for the 1897 Kansas State Fair, even though the association issued free passes to journalists from white weeklies. Apparently, the black editors had not deferred to the white manager. The *Reflector* explained:

We called upon the very important secretary concerning the matter. He is a typical Southern Virginian who thinks that every colored man when addressing a Southern gentleman of honor should doff his hat, don a grin and preface his remarks with 'Say Bosa'. . . . We did not pursue such a course, hence we were informed by that dignified Virginian who wants to be governor of Kansas, that he would not give us a complimentary [press pass], although every other weekly in Sedgwick and adjoining counties had been furnished with a free pass.<sup>58</sup>

Although Jones and Bettis responded in a respectful manner, the official treated them unfairly.

Amid protests against discriminatory treatment accorded African Americans, the newspapers reminded readers that they had some recourse when encountering discriminatory treatment, especially at white-owned businesses. A number of papers opted for what appeared to be less overt resistance, which would benefit black communities. Those papers urged African Americans to avoid, whenever possible, purchasing services or products at stores with prejudiced practices, but to find and patronize black-owned enterprises.

Following several unpleasant incidents experienced by blacks at eating establishments in Topeka, the *Ledger* wrote:

Away with the furnishing of our trade to Jim-crow restaurants in Topeka. Chip in and start one of your own and every Afro-American patronize it and keep it going [as a] successful business.<sup>59</sup>

Choosing to frequent black-owned businesses not only enabled African Americans to avoid insults and demeaning scenarios, but black entrepreneurs also benefited from the increase in clientele. To promote black patronage, the *Times-Observer* of Topeka listed black-owned businesses that advertised in the paper under the headline "Negro Enterprises." In doing so, the newspaper encouraged readers to frequent certain businesses, such as Clarence Walker's floral shop in Topeka, the Palace Restaurant in Kansas City, the office of Lawrence physician and surgeon Dr. J. H. Young, and the Brooks Hotel, "the only first class house for accommodations of colored people" in St. Joseph, Missouri.<sup>60</sup>

With the distribution of newspapers, readers became better informed about inequities practiced in their own communities, as well as similar conditions encountered by blacks living in other Kansas towns and cities. In a letter to the editor, one reader observed:

I took it for granted when I was in the South in noticing the great prejudicial feelings that existed there. The shameful and inhuman treatment which the colored [sic] people received from the whites; I found that this prejudice feeling against color is not exhibited only in the south but it is exhibited here [in Kansas] and everywhere.<sup>61</sup>

African Americans, denied a voice in mainstream newspapers, used the forum of the press to point out injustices within their communities and surrounding areas, as well as to urge

feasible approaches for resisting discrimination in public accommodations and white-owned businesses.

#### Discrimination Beyond Kansas

Black newspapers in Kansas not only alerted readers to the status of white-black relations within the state, but the papers joined the black press nationwide in addressing discrimination on a broader scope. Racial tensions intensified nationwide during the late 1880s and 1890s. Conditions for many blacks in the South were degenerating under the discrimination of Jim Crow, the convict-lien system, and the debt spiral of sharecropping. Northern blacks frequently experienced more covert racial hostilities in employment and housing policies, as well as in police brutality.

The rise of Jim Crow in the South and the blatant racial discrimination at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893 were among prominent topics covered by the press in the 1890s. As with discrimination on a local level, the Kansas newspapers relayed news pertinent to readers and voiced protests against bigotry, while also soliciting financial support for legal action.

The majority of blacks in Kansas, as first- and second-generation emigrants, had strong ties to the South.

Acknowledging their broader community, the *National Reflector* of Wichita wrote:

Kansas may not have all the grievances of discrimination . . . [that] our southern sister states seem to be enjoying (?) but the mere fact that what concerns our race in one state concerns them in every other state in the union.<sup>62</sup>

Another black newspaper urged readers to contribute money toward defending "our brothers in the south" against wrongdoing.<sup>63</sup> By using the familial terms "sister" and "brother," as well as the first-person pronoun "our," the newspapers conveyed the perceived kinship relationships that existed among blacks, no matter where they lived.

Because they shared a common history and cultural heritage with blacks in the South,<sup>64</sup> black Kansans empathized with their distant "family" members. Perhaps blacks in Kansas communities, concerned about their safety and protection, were somewhat apprehensive about the possibility of discriminatory practices increasing in their towns and cities as a repercussion of the increasing oppression in the South.<sup>65</sup> The Kansas newspapers reflected particular concern about the passage of Jim Crow laws that segregated passengers traveling on public conveyances, a practice reinforcing white supremacy. Such legislation relegated blacks to second-class citizenship, contributing

to what became "the problem of the color line" in the twentieth century.<sup>66</sup>

Beginning in the 1880s, Southern state legislatures, one by one, passed laws that codified de facto segregation of blacks and whites on public conveyances.<sup>67</sup> Commonly referred to as "Jim Crow" laws, the statutes mandated that whites ride in the first-class coach, while blacks were seated in a second-class, or smoking, car. Jim Crow ordinances affected all who traveled via the railroads in the South--whites and blacks, Southerners and Northerners, men and women, adults and children.<sup>68</sup>

The railroad was the logical choice for transportation for African Americans in Kansas who needed to visit family members, conduct business, or attend meetings in the South.<sup>69</sup> While passengers may have purchased first-class tickets in Kansas, their status changed once the train crossed into a Southern border state. Citizens of the Sunflower State then came under the jurisdiction of Jim Crow laws.

Prior to the Jim Crow era, customs and etiquette, rather than laws, defined day-to-day race relations in the South.<sup>70</sup> For example, blacks were expected to defer to whites in how they addressed one another. Courtesy titles

of "Mr." and "Mrs." were reserved for whites. Social contact between blacks and whites, especially men and women, was taboo.<sup>71</sup>

Growing racial and gender tensions after Reconstruction was a contributing factor to legalized segregation on passenger trains.<sup>72</sup> While whites and blacks could operate separately in such public spheres as churches, hotels, and restaurants, contact between the races was unavoidable when people traveled. The rapid expansion of railroad lines connected counties, cities, and states throughout the South.<sup>73</sup> Blacks and whites had no choice but to use the same railways.

Tennessee passed the first statewide Jim Crow rail law in 1881.<sup>74</sup> In 1887, Florida led the way for other Southern states by mandating that railroad companies traveling within its borders provide separate but equal accommodations for blacks and whites.<sup>75</sup> In quick succession, other Southern states passed similar legislation, and by 1891 nine states had enacted laws that separated blacks and whites on the railroads.<sup>76</sup>

For African Americans in Kansas, the black press became a primary source of news and commentary about the progression of Jim Crow laws in the South. The legalized

segregation of transportation triggered a backlash of substantial challenge and resistance among black newspapers, even though there tended to be support among African Americans for separate social institutions.<sup>77</sup>

Opportunities to experience autonomy and exercise self-determination prevailed in black churches and fraternal organizations, where African American men and women were treated with respect.<sup>78</sup> By contrast, legalized racial separation underscored the second-class status of blacks.

One prominent Ohio newspaper, the *Cleveland Gazette*, persistently agitated against Jim Crow's advance in the South. "[T]he 'Jim Crow' business--separation of colored and white people on cars and in other public places--is getting to be the rage in the south," the *Gazette* wrote after several Southern states had passed segregation laws. "Where it will end it is difficult to determine."<sup>79</sup>

By providing directives about resistance, litigation, and organized lobbying efforts, leading black newspapers in large Northern cities, such as New York and Cleveland, orchestrated protests against Jim Crow practices.<sup>80</sup> Kansas newspapers added their objections to the outcry of the black press. "WE WANT the 'Jim Crow' law repealed," the

*Southern Argus* demanded from southeast Kansas in 1891, the year that a series of states passed the law.<sup>81</sup>

The so-called "dirty and despicable" Jim Crow laws humiliated black passengers.<sup>82</sup> Rather than riding in a separate, first-class coach, middle- and upper-class blacks who purchased first-class tickets were forced to ride in a car with second-class accommodations. One Northern black newspaper, the *Indianapolis Freeman*, denounced the way blacks were "daily subjected to insult by cheap, impudent ticket-sellers, by ruffianly [sic] conductors, and forced to ride in dirty, ill-smelling 'Jim Crow' cars."<sup>83</sup>

Black newspapers, such as the *Freeman*, relayed updates about events happening in the South to other segments of the collective African-American community, separated by hundreds of miles. News reports, as well as commentary, enabled informed readers to formulate responses to the conundrum of Jim Crow. For the Kansas readership, the state's black newspapers included accounts of discrimination experienced by African Americans traveling in the South, as well as responses from the editors and correspondents.

The usual sources of the newspaper copy were excerpts from newspaper exchanges, letters to the editor, and

special correspondence. News stories and first-person accounts, often written in detail, gave readers a clearer picture of the degradation experienced by others. At times, newspapers pinpointed an opportunity where readers could take action against the discrimination.

As part of a nationwide press network, Kansas newspapers clipped news, as well as editorial opinion, about Jim Crow from their "exchanges," those papers received through the reciprocal practice of editors sending newspapers to one another.<sup>85</sup> For example, the Parsons Weekly Blade reprinted a narrative from *Voice of Missions*, published in Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>86</sup> According to the paper, Dr. C. S. Smith, a minister, had purchased first-class railroad tickets in Nashville, Tennessee, to travel to several A.M.E. conferences in Florida. After attending meetings in Lake City and Jacksonville, Smith boarded the train en route to Sanford in central Florida. He found the car "set apart for colored people divided into two compartments--one-half for smoking purposes and the other half a cattle car to huddle colored people in."<sup>87</sup>

Smith refused to ride "in that dirty box," so he determinedly took a seat in the car reserved for first-class, albeit white, passengers. The minister, however, was

forcibly ejected from the train by "a mob of railroad toughs."<sup>88</sup> Smith intended to take the case to court because the railroad had breached its responsibility to provide him with separate-but-equal accommodations.<sup>89</sup>

The courts offered a possible avenue for redress of discriminatory treatment on passenger trains, especially in interstate travel, prior to the U.S. Supreme Court's decision on *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896.<sup>90</sup> In its response to the incident, the *Blade* urged readers to send in what money they could to enable Smith to take his case to court.<sup>91</sup> By including stories such as Smith's in the newspapers, the press reminded its readers that litigation was one course of action when their rights were violated. Similarly, the Leavenworth Advocate had supported the efforts of a Manhattan, Kansas, group that was raising money for African Americans who planned to test the constitutionality of the Jim Crow law in Louisiana.<sup>92</sup>

Letters to the editor also served as a source of information about traveling conditions by train in the South. These first-person accounts often employed emotion, as well as humor, to convey the story to readers. A resident of Lawrence, Kansas, on his way to attend college in Nashville, Tennessee, sent several letters to his

hometown paper, the *Historic Times*, in which he described his experiences en route to his destination. In one letter, the writer conveyed his anxieties about "nearing the place for the 'jim crow car.'" Ironically, after the train crossed the Missouri-Tennessee border, the writer found that his fears did not come to fruition. He quipped: ". . . Whether the dust had made it impossible to distinguish one color from another I am unable to say. However I was unmolested."<sup>93</sup>

A number of newspapers circulated a column "On Matters of Interest to Afro-Americans" that covered a wide range of topics pertinent to readers, including Jim Crow laws. The regular correspondence appeared under the byline of "Larph," the pseudonym of Ralph Tyler of Columbus, Ohio.<sup>94</sup> An astute writer, Tyler earned a reputation of "gut-fighting behind the scenes while effusing the milk of human kindness in public."<sup>95</sup>

In all probability, Tyler had personal encounters with the Jim Crow system because Ohio shared its state line with Southern-border states.<sup>96</sup> In his syndicated column, Larph reminded readers that the operation of Jim Crow cars continued to increase, despite resolutions against the practice approved at mass meetings of African Americans

throughout the country. "The sooner Afro-Americans learn that deeds and not expressions only accomplish results," the columnist advised, "the sooner will growing evils be remedied."<sup>97</sup>

Larph, in contending against the unconstitutionality of many of the state laws, raised questions about the rampant inconsistencies in the enforcement of Jim Crow laws. Weighting his argument, he emphasized how such laws inconvenienced whites, as well as blacks.<sup>98</sup> Whites in the South, according to Larph, had to take responsibility for the dilemma.

To illustrate, Larph relayed the testimonial of a white woman from Louisiana traveling by train through Arkansas with an invalid child and a servant, "a young colored girl" who had the responsibility of taking care of the child.<sup>99</sup> The woman questioned why blacks in the employment of whites were not allowed in coaches, while the railroad companies employed blacks as porters in the first-class cars set aside for whites only.<sup>100</sup> "The nut is a hard one to crack, and is but another [sic] instance of the injustice and inconsistency of the law providing for separate cars for whites and blacks," Larph explained. "Our

southern white brother in his effort to legislate against the negro, invariably puts his foot in it."<sup>101</sup>

Although some Kansas editors carried similar copy, such as columns by Larph, in their newspapers, editors did not speak in a monolithic voice regarding Jim Crow. The late-nineteenth century marked a change in the way many blacks approached the issue of white-black relations. The emphasis shifted from activism as the means to achieve political and social equality to one of duty and economic action. Even though the Kansas newspapers stood unified in their opposition against Jim Crow laws, reasons underlying that position varied, as did opinions concerning the most effective responses to the laws. Some newspapers tended to take an activist position, while others endorsed a more conciliatory approach.

Some of the more militant newspapers, such as the *Chicago Appeal*, advised passengers to "fight and go to jail rather than be degraded by riding in the filthy separate car. Be a martyr for your race."<sup>102</sup> The southeast Kansas *Southern Argus* countered:

No, brother Appeal. Wrong advice. Tell them to keep out of the cars rather than fight and go to a jail. The average separate car, as a rule, is more cleanly than the average mixed jail cell. For the blacks and the whites to ride in separate cars in certain southern states is a law of those states and must be

respected and obeyed. The Negro has the reputation of being a law-abiding citizen and does not care to make himself a martyr by violating the laws of his country. Suppose he waits until the constitutionality of the separate coach law has been duly tested by the courts of the country.<sup>103</sup>

When a separate rail car bill was introduced to the Missouri legislature in 1893, *American Citizen* editor C. H. J. Taylor joined the St. Joe (Mo.) *Optic* in campaigning against the legislation.<sup>104</sup> Taylor, who had some influence among Democrats in Missouri, traveled to the capital, Jefferson City, to lobby against the bill. In reasoning with Democratic legislators, Taylor warned that passing the bill would be a betrayal against those African Americans who voted for the Democratic ticket in the past election.<sup>105</sup>

Taylor's opposition against the separate car law was not grounded in the notion that Jim Crow laws demeaned blacks. On the contrary, in some cases, separate car laws served a purpose. In explaining the reasoning for his stance to *Citizen* readers, Taylor wrote:

We see no reason why any sensible person should feel any loss of self-respect because of a regulation requiring him to ride in a coach set apart for his race. Such regulations do not put a brand of permanent inferiority on the Negro. They are merely an assertion that the peace can more easily be kept at present by thus separating the races. . . . We need no Separate Coach law. We can keep peace without it.<sup>106</sup>

True to Taylor's assurances, the legislature, voting nine for and ninety against, defeated the bill.<sup>107</sup>

Missouri newspapers credited Taylor as contributing to the outcome of the bill.<sup>108</sup> Black newspapers added their praise for Taylor's efforts. "We commend the Hon. C. H. J. Taylor in killing the separate coffin bill (meaning coach) for our ladies and daughters to ride in amid smoke and other dissenting odors," wrote the *Ledger*.<sup>109</sup>

The disheartening times of the 1890s may have been a determining factor for approaches used by the *Argus* and the *Citizen* in braving Jim Crow. One historian observed that in times of discouragement blacks adopted a more conservative rather than radical approach.<sup>110</sup> While the Kansas newspapers denounced the racism of Jim Crow, they tended to be less militant than other papers such as the *Cleveland Gazette*, which endorsed the refusal of railroad passengers to comply with Jim Crow laws.<sup>111</sup>

Coupled with their coverage of Jim Crow in the South, Kansas editors joined a wider network of black newspapers in protesting other instances of racial discrimination against the collective community of African Americans. In particular, the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893, an international event, revealed the racism deeply ingrained within American society in the late-nineteenth century. Two years following the World's

Fair, Bishop Turner wrote that the blacks "who did go [to Chicago], went there and got Jim Crowed or saw their race Jim Crowed, and Jim Crowed by the nation, too," at the Exposition.<sup>112</sup> Black newspaper coverage revealed the eager anticipation of an event to display the accomplishments of the black race since slavery, as well as the prejudice that divided black and white Americans.

The Columbian Exposition, in the planning process for years, featured the cultural and technological progress of the United States. Prior to the event, African Americans anticipated displaying to the world how much they had achieved as a race since the end of the Civil War, countering the perception of second-class citizenship for African Americans.<sup>113</sup> The event, however, became a stigma of racial discrimination, with African Americans barred from organizing the Exposition and establishing its policies. Only a few black organizations had a presence at the Exposition.<sup>114</sup>

The press' reactions to the rebuff by the government and the Exposition varied.<sup>115</sup> The papers divided along ideological lines, as some newspapers tended to lean toward a conciliatory approach, while others opted for a more radical position regarding issues of black-white relations

at the fair. "The Negro press appears to be equally divided between having and not having a separate and distinct 'exhibition of Negro advancement' at the Worlds [sic] Fair," the *American Citizen* reported.<sup>116</sup> During the planning stages of the event, some newspapers promoted the idea of having a separate section for black exhibits, while others urged that African Americans be allowed to participate fully throughout the fair.<sup>117</sup>

To protest the exclusion of African Americans at the Exposition, Frederick Douglass and journalist Ida B. Wells collaborated on an eighty-one-page pamphlet with editions in several languages for distribution to fair visitors. The pamphlet, "The Reason why the Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition," included essays written by Douglass, journalist and educator I. Garland Penn, and Ferdinand Barnett, owner and editor of the Chicago *Conservator*. To fund the printing costs, Wells and Douglass solicited contributions for the project through black newspapers.<sup>118</sup>

The *Topeka Call*, the *Afro-American Advocate* of Coffeyville, *Atchison Blade*, and the *Parsons Weekly Blade* were among those papers in Kansas that supported the Douglass-Wells project, joining other newspapers, such as

the *Cleveland Gazette* and the *Richmond Planet*.<sup>119</sup> The *Parsons Weekly Blade* assured newspapers that questioned the validity of Wells's connection to the project that they could put their concerns to rest.<sup>120</sup> However, the *American Citizen* criticized Wells's project. "The people that Miss Wells desires to convince in our behalf, hear her one hour while they hear the other side twenty three," the *Citizen* reasoned.<sup>121</sup> Efforts would be better served to "get out a pamphlet to our race, for we have more to complain of from our own people than anybody else," according to the *Citizen*.<sup>122</sup> Despite their efforts, Wells and Douglass raised only enough money to distribute pamphlets printed in English.<sup>123</sup>

In an effort to appease African Americans, Chicago Exposition organizers scheduled Colored Jubilee Day for 25 August 1893, a day designated for blacks to attend the fair. Though there was support from some African Americans, many were incensed. Initially resistant, the *American Citizen* reported that those in authority were determined to "draw the color line."<sup>124</sup> The *Parsons Weekly Blade*, one of the papers that protested the day, wrote: "We are opposed, and very strongly opposed, to the proposition of having a day set apart by the managers of the World's Fair as a

colored people's day. It is an insult to our people . . . .

Representation without discrimination is what we want."<sup>125</sup>

The Topeka Call agreed: "[T]here is to be no 'white American citizen's day,' why should there a 'colored American citizen's day'?"<sup>126</sup>

Despite the controversy that surrounded the Exposition, black newspapers ran advertisements for travel accommodations to the fair.<sup>127</sup> A number of blacks from Kansas were among the twenty-seven million visitors who attended the Chicago event.<sup>128</sup> The *American Citizen* informed readers that admission to the fair was five dollars per day, with additional charges for seats and drinking water. "This is simply outrageous and should call forth a loud and determined protest from an outraged public," the *Citizen* protested.<sup>129</sup> The *Parsons Weekly Blade* did note that those blacks from Kansas who attended "the World's Fair will certainly have too much pride to make their presence known on jubilee day, the day set apart for the Negroes."<sup>130</sup>

Newspaper coverage of reactions by fair attendees conveyed a perspective omitted in the coverage by mainstream newspapers. Topeka attorney James H. Guy shared his observations with the *Kansas State Ledger*. Guy viewed the event as "purely a white man's affair. The colored

people are 'not in it a little bit.' "<sup>131</sup> Another fair visitor, F. L. Jeltz, focused his comments on the exhibits from Africa, which he described as "curiosities" that cast a negative light on American blacks.<sup>132</sup>

Jeltz's reaction to the African exhibits at the Exposition was understandable, considering the tenor of the times. Most elite and middle-class blacks believed that education, hard work, and moral living would advance the overall social and economic position of African Americans and diminish the prejudicial attitudes of whites.<sup>133</sup> In all probability, Jeltz viewed the African exhibits as reinforcing the notion of "black peril," a theory promoted by some social historians of the era.<sup>134</sup> According to this theory, African Americans had regressed to the "primitive state" of their African origin after the Civil War because they no longer lived under the control of white masters.<sup>135</sup> "We did not like quite as much honor as seemed to be accorded these African slaves," Jeltz wrote, "for many persons would feel that all Negroes looked like these."<sup>136</sup>

#### Judge Lynch and Mob Law

Amid the South's fervor to solidify social distance between blacks and whites, as well as the racism that pervaded American society, angst enveloped many African

American communities as lynchings of blacks became regular occurrences in the 1880s and 1890s, especially in the South. The *Chicago Tribune*, which began keeping an official count in 1882, recorded more than 2,500 blacks lynched in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>137</sup> In the 1890s, someone was lynched in the United States every other day, with two of three victims being black and the vast majority living in the South.<sup>138</sup> During 1892, the number of lynchings peaked. One source documented more than 150 blacks killed by mob law.<sup>139</sup>

The ever-increasing number of lynching incidents, featured prominently in black newspapers, disturbed many African Americans in Kansas. The *National Reflector* of Wichita editorialized that white men charged with committing a crime faced a judge and jury in court. This was not the case "if a colored man is charged with the like offense, and why not if race, color or condition does not enter into the reason?"<sup>140</sup> Mobs produced "sledgehammers, ropes and the like as the method, not of punishment so much as revenge" against blacks who crossed the color line.<sup>141</sup> The imbalance of lynch law versus legal rights unnerved many African Americans.

The black press became a vital channel through which African Americans in Kansas agitated against the mounting violence directed toward blacks, especially in the South.<sup>142</sup> The increasing number of lynching incidents intimidated blacks in the South, as well as the North. With virtually no condemnation from mainstream newspapers or white churches, black newspapers assumed leadership in their outcries against what was often referred to as "Southern Outrages."<sup>143</sup> The newspapers relayed news of lynchings, as well as provided a forum for denouncing the acts of violence.

Such was the case in January 1890, when the Leavenworth Advocate reported the "deliberate murder" of eight men. The men were killed three days after Christmas, in Barnwell County, South Carolina. Referring to the lynchings, the Advocate caustically wrote: "It doesn't take a very green Christmas to make fat church yards for the negroes in the South."<sup>144</sup>

A week later, the paper reported that African Americans in Topeka, after hearing news of another lynching in Barnwell, called for a mass "indignation" meeting. Those in attendance expressed, through the Advocate, their "sympathy with the colored people of the South," as well as

their outrage against the murder of blacks, committed under the guise of justice.<sup>145</sup> The paper publicized the resolutions proposed and adopted by the group, which included an invitation for blacks to emigrate to "the Indian Territory and northern and western states and territories until their rights are guaranteed and protected" in the South.<sup>146</sup>

Defined as "the extralegal execution of an alleged criminal done under the pretext of retribution for supposed crime," lynching denied victims their rights to due process and left them defenseless against the mob.<sup>147</sup> Organized mobs of whites--often led by community leaders--took on roles of judge, jury, and executioner for those deemed violators of community standards and mores. Typically, mobs of vigilantes, groups as small as a dozen to those as large as several hundred, presumed the guilt and determined the punishment of their victims.<sup>148</sup>

Lynching, as a form of social control, reinforced white supremacy, which was threatened by blacks' political and economic gains during Reconstruction.<sup>149</sup> Lynch law became an accepted way to deal with what many whites believed to be the "new crime" committed by black men after slavery ended, raping white women.<sup>150</sup> The lynching

mentality, ingrained deeply in racial and gender stereotypes, dehumanized black men as rapists, black women as prostitutes, and white women as dependent solely on white men's valor to protect their honor.<sup>151</sup>

The mainstream press did little to counter the rationale used to justify mob law. White newspapers generally relied on sensational coverage of lynchings, with an emphasis on drama rather than facts. When reporting the incidents, the white press invariably assumed the guilt of the lynching victim and rarely condemned the actions of the mob.<sup>152</sup>

Challenging such callous coverage by the white press, the *American Citizen* of Kansas City wrote:

There was not a day last week in which some poor Negro was not lynched in the south for some supposed outrage upon some white person, and yet our great journals at the north, both democratic and republican are as dumb as oysters in regard to them. Such things are published daily without one word of condemnation, but some of our staunchest republican journals, those supposed truest friends of the oppressed of all classes and conditions, publish the facts under such glowing headlines as to lead one to think that they take satisfaction in announcing such condign punishment upon such "Black Brutes," as some of them never, fail to call them.<sup>153</sup>

Consider the lynching of a black man in Paris, Texas, in February 1893. A four-year-old daughter of a white police officer was found murdered in the Texas town.

Suspicion fell on a man named Henry Smith, who was identified by the girl's family members as having assaulted and murdered her. Mainstream newspapers reported Smith's capture and subsequent death by torching, portrayed in graphic detail. A crowd of thousands reportedly witnessed the lynching. In their coverage, white papers raised no challenge of Smith's guilt or the extralegal administration of his execution.<sup>154</sup>

The coverage of the Smith lynching by black newspapers of Kansas, however, contrasted with the sensational reports of mainstream newspapers.<sup>155</sup> Questioning both the facts reported in the general press and the lack of condemnation for those who took the law into their own hands, the Parsons *Weekly Blade* inquired:

. . . if Smith was a brute, what of the mob that murdered him? Was not the law adequate to mete out justice? Was the law not equal to the emergency in this case, even in Texas where the blood runs hot with race prejudice? It certainly would have proven itself thus had the 'right' been permitted to prevail in this awful conglomeration of brutality and fiendishness. The mob that murdered Henry Smith was more anxious to satiate their accursed thirst for Negro blood than they were for avenging the death of the murdered girl.<sup>156</sup>

A later investigation into the circumstances surrounding the lynching, conducted by antilynching advocate Ida B. Wells, confirmed charges against the white press of distortion and exaggeration of the facts.<sup>157</sup>

Other lynchings raised furious outcries from the Kansas editors, who released their pent-up emotions through the newspaper. The *American Citizen* devoted much of the 12 March 1892 issue to deplored the ruthless slaughter of three black businessmen, co-owners of a successful grocery store in Memphis, Tennessee, and well respected by their clientele.<sup>158</sup> The tragedy, the catalyst for the antilynching campaign of Ida B. Wells,<sup>159</sup> clearly debunked the notion that lynching was reserved for rapists and criminals.

On a page usually reserved for society news in the *American Citizen*, assistant editor Francis Jackson wrote:

The latest outrage perpetrated upon the long suffering Negro--seems to us to call for something more than patient endurance--It calls for dynamite and blood-shed--Shall the blood of those three men slain in Memphis Wednesday go unavenged? Shall we sit quietly down and allow the chains of tyranny, cruelty and despotism to be forged stronger and tighter upon our unresisting hands?<sup>160</sup>

In protest, the paper also included a poem by its Kansas City correspondent, Tilford Davis Jr. In "To the Mob-ocracy of the South," Davis used the repetitious phrase, "This was a man" to counter the stereotype of the savage black rapist and to reaffirm the humanity of black men whose legal rights were denied by mob law.<sup>161</sup>

During the late-nineteenth century, the Kansas press also protested the mob law that touched local communities on numerous occasions. Seven black men were lynched in Kansas during the 1890s.<sup>162</sup> The *National Reflector* reminded

readers that prior to 1895, the state led "all other states north of Mason and Dixon's line" in the number of lynchings.<sup>163</sup>

With the reports of lynching by the black press, the newspapers included dialogue among the editors that centered on reactions to the mob murders. When Hugh Henry, accused of rape, was lynched without a trial at Larned, located west of Wichita, the *American Citizen* issued the following invitation to its journalistic contemporaries: "What have you to say brothers of The Blade, Times Observer, Call and the Ledger? We shall wait a few days to hear from you."<sup>164</sup>

In response, the *Kansas State Ledger* raised questions about the white woman's motivation in accusing Henry of rape. "We are told that our republicans of the opposite sex are our friends. Did they have a hand in the Larned hanging? If they did; they are worse than inhuman curs, and favor judge Lynch. . . . Every negro newspaper in the state of Kansas should . . . sound the battle cry of justice and ask Judge Lynch is he right."<sup>165</sup> Despite *State Ledger*'s suspicions about the facts leading to the rape accusations, the *Atchison Blade* expressed little sympathy for Hughes's fate. The paper viewed the lynching as a warning that other black men should ". . . stop spending time with low, white women."<sup>166</sup>

The following year, a second incident in Salina brought the reality of lynching close to blacks in Kansas. The press appeared to shift its primary focus to the actions of the mob and the local law enforcement officials involved in the lynchings. In the first instance, the governor intervened by sending the state militia before a frenzied crowd of 1,000 could lynch a black man accused of rape.<sup>167</sup> However, less than a month later, a mob accosted a prisoner, convicted of attempted murder, whom authorities were transporting to the Lansing penitentiary. The man was hanged on a telegraph pole.<sup>168</sup>

The *Kansas State Ledger* made references in both instances to the influence of the "white caps" on the mob participants at Salina.<sup>169</sup> Editor Jeltz denounced the "cowardly sheriff" of Saline County, who had charge of the man lynched, for refusing to offer a reward for the capture of the mob leaders.<sup>170</sup> The *Parsons Weekly Blade* urged authorities to send "the murderous hoodlums of Salina, Kansas, as part of the Kansas exhibit at the World's Fair."<sup>171</sup>

The lynching in Salina prompted African American citizens of Topeka and neighboring communities to gather to determine some official response. At the meeting, attendees passed a series of resolutions urging that authorities take legal action against the murders, and they elected a committee of nine to meet with the governor. The group also

voted that a resolution "be furnished to the Topeka papers and to the Negro papers throughout the state with a request that they publish and give prominence to the same."<sup>172</sup>

Through a concerted effort by group members, along with the support of the press, several representatives gained an appointment with Governor Lorenzo Lewelling. The *Parsons Weekly Blade* reported that the committee of African Americans received a cordial greeting from the governor, "who expressed his sympathy with the sentiments of the resolutions."<sup>173</sup> Lewelling then issued a reward of \$300 for the capture and conviction of the mob leaders. The reward, however, did not lead to any charges or arrests.<sup>174</sup>

While black leaders welcomed the governor's support, the crux of mitigating lynching, according to the state's black press, was enforcement of the laws and due process in the courts. Punishment should be reserved for those who were convicted of committing crimes, whether black or white, including members of lynching mobs. "We appeal to the officers . . . to do their duty and see that every lawbreaker (murderers, as of course they are) be brought to trial and get a good and most reasonable sentence."<sup>175</sup>

Due process, according the *Kansas State Ledger* and other newspapers, would resolve the travesty of lynching. If law officials enforced the laws, lynching would stop.<sup>176</sup> The *National Reflector* commended the trial of a white man, stating, "though he was guilty of actual rape and an

attempt at rape, he was given a fair trial and condemned and sentenced to death, and such a course will do more toward suppressing such a crime than a hundred unlawful lynchings."<sup>177</sup>

Even though most of the Kansas editors did not endorse retribution against lynchers, on one occasion, F. L. Jeltz of the *State Ledger* could not contain his fury. In the spring of 1894, after mobs killed a black man in southeast Kansas and two white men near the Kansas-Colorado border, Jeltz wrote: "Lynch law seems to be a germ terminating in an epidemic. It begins in the feet and at least monopolizes the whole body. Let us say, call out the militia and shoot the lynchers."<sup>178</sup>

According to the *Leavenworth Advocate*, if attempts to gain passage of antilynching laws by state or local governments failed, black citizens who needed protection should resort to self-defense when threatened. The *Advocate* urged:

. . . [T]hen we say to the people, whose rights are trampled upon rough, shod by a lawless and murderous class, to protect yourselves. Do so by organizing and arming yourselves with rifles that will shoot a hundred times--if necessary . . . Send terror and destruction to the fire-sides of your oppressors and the lynch law will go!<sup>179</sup>

A number of Kansas editors affirmed the actions of African Americans who resisted the threats of a mob. For example, a black man moved from Topeka to Pomona to work

for a local doctor. Residents of Pomona resented the black man's presence in their community, and a mob of the town's citizens, "one of whom had a rope," surrounded the residence where he was staying. In self-defense, "the negro procured a revolver and begun pumping lead into the crowd, which fled after one of them received a bullet in his leg."<sup>180</sup>

The next morning the black man was arrested and charged with disturbing the peace. In defense of the man's actions, the *National Reflector* speculated: "If more negroes would present the same forcible argument in such cases, the white capping and mobbing of colored men would greatly decrease."<sup>181</sup>

In another instance, the *Parsons Weekly Blade* commended a group of blacks in Parsons who paraded "the streets and alleys with winchester [sic] rifles," to protect a black man from a threatened lynching by whites in Parsons.<sup>182</sup> "Brave men kept a sharp watch until daylight," wrote the *Blade*. The black residents of Parsons came to the man's aid, even though none of them knew him.<sup>183</sup>

In 1897, activism against lynching extended beyond cooperation of black citizens living in Kansas communities. In an effort to capitalize on ties established through the network of black newspapers in Kansas, the editors of the *National Reflector* of Wichita queried African American

leaders about forming an antilynching association. They wrote:

Our plan is to organize a State League, the mission or purpose of which shall be to thoroughly organize the State into county leagues, for the purpose of discouraging mob violence and lynch law, agitating public sentiment, with a view to providing adequate punishment for these hell-hounds who override the law. . . . What we need is an organization of sincere men who will work for the interest of the race and not for political aggrandizement.<sup>184</sup>

As the first step, editors S. W. Jones and W. A. Bettis called for a gathering of representatives from communities throughout the state to "work for the interest of the race and not political grandizement."<sup>185</sup> In the past, those who attended such meetings had rigorously debated issues and passed resolutions, but no one took action. What was needed, the *National Reflector* asserted, were "men who are willing to act as well as resolve."<sup>186</sup>

News of a near lynching in Great Bend, Kansas, may have provided the impetus for the *National Reflector* initiative. William Jeltz, former editor of *The People's Friend* in Wichita, got involved in a quarrel over a bet in a billiard game. Jeltz stabbed and fatally injured his opponent, who was white. The former Wichita newspaperman fled the scene but was arrested and taken to jail. Local African Americans who threatened to "lynch the lynchers" held off a group of white townsmen intent on lynching

Jeltz.<sup>187</sup> The *National Reflector* did not justify Jeltz's actions, but the paper called for a fair trial.<sup>188</sup>

The editors received positive responses regarding their proposal to form the antilynching league. Represented among the supporters were leaders from the northeast, southeast, and southwest regions of the state, including John L. Waller of Kansas City; W. B. Townsend of Leavenworth; the Rev. W. L. Grant of Topeka; Dr. S. W. Wilson of Coffeyville; J. W. Green of Hutchinson; J. F. Ready of Ottawa; and J. B. O'Dair of Emporia.<sup>189</sup>

The paper wrote of one lone dissenter, Leavenworth *Herald* editor B. K. Bruce Jr. Even though Bruce's long-time associate Townsend had pledged his support to the *National Reflector* editors, the Leavenworth editor refused to endorse the plan. Bruce wrote:

It was far better to agitate the making of the very best American citizenship, which means that the colored people should bend [sic] their time and energy to the building of better homes, to the acquiring of more of the luxuries of life, and above all, to producing a better, more refined and cultured people in Kansas.<sup>190</sup>

The *National Reflector* accused Bruce of advocating lynching of white men as a deterrent to the lynching of blacks.<sup>191</sup> Bruce countered the charge, asserting that he did not support lynching as a way to resolve the crime problem. Instead, he believed cooperation rather than agitation was the way to elevate the race. According to the Leavenworth

*Herald*, the only way to stop lynching was to educate "a people in the path of right-doing, rear the youth to respect the weaker sex, and crimes will cease."<sup>192</sup> In part to protest against the antilynching league, Bruce removed the *National Reflector* from the Leavenworth *Herald*'s exchange list.<sup>193</sup>

Bruce's opposition to the antilynching league reflected his heated criticism of Ida B. Wells's antilynching efforts several years earlier. He was one of the few black editors in Kansas who challenged her assertion that many of those lynched were innocent of any crime. Wells had become a "lightening rod" in the debate over lynching. Her candid speeches about rape as an excuse for lynching drew fire from the mainstream press, as well as several black newspapers.<sup>194</sup> In her efforts to raise public awareness about the injustice of mob law, she traveled to England in 1893 and 1894, where she was lecturing on lynching in the United States.

Bruce saw no benefit in Wells addressing the English about lynching. To one of his critics, Bruce responded:

It matters not whether she tells the truth or not, the cold, stern fact remains that when she finishes her tour our condition will be and remain the same until by our own conduct we make it better.<sup>195</sup>

While she was in England the second time, Bruce wrote, "Come home, Miss Wells, and make your appeal to Americans

for Americans. . . . Agitation in foreign lands has no weight, does not accomplish anything, and when it is all over, our people, as before, must face their condition as it exists here."<sup>196</sup> He accused Wells of enhancing her prominence so she could "fill her purse."<sup>197</sup> Though Bruce never explicitly referred to gender in his criticism of Wells, he wrote that she had overstepped her bounds and "delegated herself the care and keeping of the entire colored population in the United States."<sup>198</sup>

Even the white press took notice of Bruce's attacks. The *Kansas City Star* accused the Leavenworth editor of organizing "a revolt among his people against Ida B. Wells."<sup>199</sup> Bruce countered, "When a lady presents an idea, the idea is open to discussion. We discuss the idea and not the lady."<sup>200</sup> Bruce viewed Wells as a sensational lecturer whose objective was to "stir up race antagonism, create strife, embitter and foster antipathy."<sup>201</sup> Again, Bruce revealed his support for cooperation with and accommodation to whites. Bruce wrote: "In very plain language, it is better for the man in the cage to make friends with the lion than to make friends with the fellow outside."<sup>202</sup>

Following Wells's 1894 lecture visit to Leavenworth, Bruce disclosed more about the ideology that fueled his

criticism of the antilynching activist.<sup>203</sup> In her presentation, Wells had asserted:

There is an organ of the race in this city which states that "our people must observe the laws, become wealthy educated and refined if they wish to prosper in this country," thus implying that those who are lynched belong to the "tough" element. This is vile slander upon our people and should be condemned in unmeasured terms by every lover of the race. It is not the "tough" element that is lynched, but it is the better element--those who are becoming wealthy, educated and refined.<sup>204</sup>

On the contrary, Bruce retorted, it generally was the "tougher element" that were lynched. Bruce believed that Wells's assertions insulted those who were hardworking and law-abiding because he viewed her claims as an inference that African Americans who had advanced economically would be lynched.<sup>205</sup>

In Kansas, the *National Reflector* and the *Parsons Weekly Blade* were among the more outspoken defenders of Wells against the criticism she received from Bruce and other black editors, as well as the mainstream press. The *Reflector* wrote: "Despite the many attacks through the press, and otherwise, made upon Miss Ida Wells, the brave little lady who has taken a bold stand against Southern lynching, her efforts are bringing for the good already."<sup>206</sup> The *Parsons Weekly Blade* touted Wells's efforts, especially her trips to England, as instrumental in bringing the issue of lynching into the limelight and public arena of the press.<sup>207</sup>

Carrying on the Charge

To be heard and acknowledged in the public arena gave blacks in Kansas some hope for recourse against the backlash of racism. Among the priorities of the press was the resolve to work toward achieving assurances of civil rights for African Americans that included their extended community in the South. ". . . [W]hat matters most is our rights as American citizens. Let's see to this first," urged the *Parsons Weekly Blade*.<sup>208</sup>

The most realistic means for carrying out that charge was exposing, through the press, the discriminatory practices and acts of violence perpetrated against blacks.

There is no power greater than public opinion, and the tide once turned in the right direction will drive all manner of evil; no matter how strengthened by organs into eternal forgetfulness. Arouse public opinion against lynch law and one blow from its mighty arm will lay that accursed thing a victim at our feet. Jim Crow cars will cease to run in the Southland, and every American citizen, regardless of nationality, will enjoy free and equal rights. Public sentiment once turned in our favor much of this cussedness, which now confronts us, will be known no more.<sup>209</sup>

In making their contribution to the pool of public opinion, black newspapers in Kansas conveyed needed information to their readers, articulated protests against injustices, and offered African Americans options of recourse for attaining full citizenship. Collectively, the black press of Kansas helped shape opinions regarding civil rights issues that

concerned its readers among various segments within the wider community of African Americans.<sup>210</sup>

Notes

<sup>1</sup>Leavenworth Advocate, 20 July 1889.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 27 July 1889.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 20 July 1889.

<sup>5</sup>Randall B. Woods, "Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation? The 'Color Line' in Kansas, 1878-1900," in *African Americans on the Western Frontier*, eds. Monroe Lee Billington and Roger D. Hardaway, 128-146 (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1998).

<sup>6</sup>E. M. Woods, "Salutatory," *Southern Argus*, Baxter Springs, Kansas, 18 June 1891.

<sup>7</sup>For example, journalist and politician Marshall Murdock of the Wichita Eagle praised the writing skills of editor S. W. Jones. (*National Baptist World*, 7 September 1894).

<sup>8</sup>The *Southern Argus*, the *American Citizen*, and the *Kansas State Ledger* were among newspapers that noted white readers as subscribers. For examples, see *Southern Argus*, 18 June 1891; *American Citizen*, 6 September 1889; *Kansas State Ledger*, 27 April 1894.

<sup>9</sup>Congress passed major civil rights acts in 1866, 1870, 1871, and 1875.

<sup>10</sup>Gilbert Thomas Stephenson, "The Separation of the Races in Public Conveyances," *The American Political Science Review* 3, No. 2 (May 1908): 180-204.

<sup>11</sup>"Civil Rights Cases, 109 U.S. 3(1883) (USSC+)" [online], accessed 30 September 2000, available from [http://www2.law.cornell.edu/cgi-in/folio/cgi.exe/historic/query=/\\*/doc/{t7643}?; Internet](http://www2.law.cornell.edu/cgi-in/folio/cgi.exe/historic/query=/*/doc/{t7643}?; Internet).

<sup>12</sup>David Domke, "The Black Press in the 'Nadir' of African Americans," *Journalism History* 20, no. 3-4 (Autumn-Winter, 1994): 131-138.

<sup>13</sup>Washington (D.C) *People's Advocate*, 20 October 1883; Domke, 133.

<sup>14</sup>*New York Globe*, 20 October 1883, excerpted in Martin E. Dann, ed., *The Black Press, 1827-1890: A Quest for National Identity* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 167-168.

<sup>15</sup>Stephenson, 185.

<sup>16</sup> In 1874, Kansas became the third state to pass a civil rights statute on public accommodations. See Joseph P. Doherty, *Civil Rights in Kansas: Past, Present and Future* (Topeka: State of Kansas Commission on Civil Rights, 1972), 8, 9.

<sup>17</sup>Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., "The African-American Experience," in *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America*, ed. Charles Calhoun (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996), 141; August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1963), 20-21.

<sup>18</sup>*The United States at Large Treaties of the United States of America*, Vol. 10 [book online] (Boston: Little Brown, 1855), accessed on 30 September 2000, available from <http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/texts/kanneb.html>; Internet.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas C. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka, Kansas, 1865-1915: A Social History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 3-5.

<sup>20</sup>William E. Connelley, *History of Kansas Newspapers* (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1916), 180, 223; David Dary, *Red Book and Black Ink: Journalism in the Old West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 42-44; Dennis Lawrence, "The Impact of Local, State and Federal Decisions on Segregation and Subsequent Integration of Sumner High

School in Kansas City, Kansas" (Unpublished diss., University of Kansas, 1997), 28-29.

<sup>21</sup>James A. Rawley, *Race and Politics: "Bleeding Kansas" and The Coming of the Civil War* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1969), 10-13.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 10-13. The following brief statement written by Frederick Douglass sums up the primary distinction between Free-staters and Abolitionists: "The cry of Free Men was raised not for the extension of liberty to the black man, but for the protection of the liberty of the white" (p. 12).

<sup>23</sup>Before final approval, drafts of the constitution were submitted at conventions held at Topeka (1855), Lecompton (1857), Leavenworth (1858), and Wyandotte (1859). Following the Topeka Convention, the Kansas territory became a battle ground between proslavery and antislavery forces, an era known as "Bleeding Kansas." See Robert Stone, "Kansas Laws and Their Origin," in *A Standard of Kansas and Kansans*, Vol. 2 [book online], compiled by William E. Connelley (Kansas State Historical Society, 1918), accessed 30 September 2000, available at <http://169.147.169.151/genweb/archives/1918ks/v2/935.html>; Internet.

<sup>24</sup>Woods, "Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation," 132-133; Lawrence, 31.

<sup>25</sup>Cox, 27; Woods, "Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation," 133. Black units were not officially accepted into the Kansas National Guard until 1898.

<sup>26</sup>*The Laws of the State of Kansas* (Topeka, KS: State Printing Works, 1874), 82. The law applied to businesses that required a license from municipal authorities for operation.

<sup>27</sup>The statute's specific wording stated "any state university, college, or other school of public instruction." See *Laws of the State of Kansas*, 82.

<sup>28</sup>Lawrence, 41; Woods, "Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation," 134.

<sup>29</sup>Joseph P. Doherty, *Civil Rights in Kansas: Past, Present and Future* (Topeka: State of Kansas Commission on Civil Rights, 1972), 9. Kansas became the third state to pass a statute that sought to enforce the exercise of rights for blacks.

<sup>30</sup>Topeka Call, 11 September 1892.

<sup>31</sup>For examples, see *American Citizen*, 22 November 1889; *Leavenworth Advocate*, 8 November 1890; *Atchison Blade*, 5 November 1892; *Leavenworth Herald*, 1 February 1896; *National Reflector*, 1 February 1896; *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 16 February 1896. The papers also published similar instances occurring in other states, such as the hotels in Hartford, Connecticut, that refused accommodations to black students from Hampton Institute in Virginia (*Leavenworth Herald*, 15 February 1896).

<sup>32</sup>*National Reflector*, 14 March 1896.

<sup>33</sup>Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 73; Cox, *Blacks in Topeka*, 118-19.

<sup>34</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 7 October 1892; *Leavenworth Herald*, 6 March 1897.

<sup>35</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 7 October 1892.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid. In the first three stanzas of the poem, Jeltz predicted Benjamin Harrison's victory over Grover Cleveland in the 1892 election, as well as criticized the influx of foreign emigrants.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid. Prior to the ruling, Judge Guthrie had "given the people of Shawnee county evidence of his ability or inability to officiate as Judge. The colored people are against him. Their grievances are well founded" (*Times-Observer*, 20 August 1892).

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 11 February 1893; 18 February 1893.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 11 February 1893.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Baker's efforts, while debunked, helped him gain support among black voters for his successful U.S. Senate race the following year. For a brief sketch on Baker, see "Biographical Directory of the United States Congress" [online], accessed 30 September, available from <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=B00070>; Internet.

<sup>44</sup>*American Citizen*, 1 February 1895. The bill proposed two years earlier had a provision to abolish separate schools. A requirement of mixed schools was a point of contention for African Americans who viewed mixed schools as an end to the employment of black teachers. (*Atchison Blade*, 18 February 1893).

<sup>45</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 23 February 1895.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 6 March 1893. Hackbusch, a German immigrant, settled in Leavenworth in 1875. The former newspaper editor made his living as a surveyor prior to his election to the Kansas Legislature in 1893. See William G. Cutler, "Leavenworth County, Part 21," *The History of the State of Kansas* [book online], A. T. Andreas, Chicago, IL, 1883, accessed 30 September 2000, available from <http://raven.cc.ukans.edu/~hisite/kancoll/books/cutler/Leavenworth>; Internet.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 30 January 1897; 6 March 1893.

<sup>48</sup>Excerpt from *Topeka Call* in *Leavenworth Herald*, 6 March 1893.

<sup>49</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 6 March 1893.

<sup>50</sup>"Kansas Civil Rights," *Topeka Call*, 11 September 1892; "Civilization Enslaves the Negro," *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 28 September 1895.

<sup>51</sup>*National Reflector*, 13 February 1897.

<sup>52</sup> "Murray's Fair," *Leavenworth Advocate*, 15 September 1888.

<sup>53</sup> "Ibid. Grocer R. J. Smith, an advertiser in the *Advocate*, was present when Murray confessed that he lied about the incident (*Leavenworth Advocate*, 16 March 1889).

<sup>54</sup> *Leavenworth Advocate*, 15 September 1888. Several months later, after an apparent reorganization of the store and perhaps for advertising revenue, the newspaper ran display ads for the store (*Leavenworth Advocate*, 20 April 1889).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*; 8 September 1888.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *National Reflector*, 25 September 1897.

<sup>59</sup> *Kansas State Ledger*, 7 October 1892. The *Leavenworth Herald* gave similar advice to readers, who would be better served if they did not "force themselves into places where they were not wanted" (*Leavenworth Herald*, 14 March 1896).

<sup>60</sup> *Times-Observer*, 3 October 1891. A column headlined "Negro Enterprises" included small display ads for about 15 black-run businesses in cities in Northeast Kansas.

<sup>61</sup> *Leavenworth Advocate*, 8 November 1890.

<sup>62</sup> *National Reflector*, 8 February 1896. Newspapers used "(?)" as an editorial comment of sarcasm to readers.

<sup>63</sup> Excerpt from the *Langston (Okla.) City Herald*, in *American Citizen*, 11 September 1891.

<sup>64</sup> *Kansas State Ledger*, 22 July 1892; 12 August 1892.

<sup>65</sup> Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, *Promiseland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 38.

<sup>66</sup>W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), in *Three Negro Classics: Up from Slavery, The Souls of Black Folk, The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 209.

<sup>67</sup>Stephenson, 180-204; Pauli Murray, ed., *States' Laws on Race and Color* (Cincinnati: Women's Division of Christian Service, Board of Missions and Church Extension, The Methodist Church, 1950); C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 211-212; August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1963), 23; C. Vann Woodward, *Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955; 3rd rev. ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 253; Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America*, 6th ed. (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 1987; Paperback, New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 268; Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 137.

Note: The state statutes passed during the 1880s and 1890s were the second wave of Jim Crow laws, the first being those passed after the Civil War, beginning in 1865 with Mississippi and Florida. These were repealed during Reconstruction. By 1891, nine states had adopted some sort of law prohibiting blacks and whites from riding together in the same railroad coach: Tennessee, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Georgia.

<sup>68</sup>Stephen, 180, 190-191. Black newspapers in the 1880s applied the term "Jim Crow" to the rail coaches provided for black passengers, as well as the laws that separated blacks and whites on cars and in other public places (*Cleveland Gazette*, 19 May 1888; *Cleveland Gazette*, 11 July 1891). By 1901, the phrase was used readily to refer to the segregation of blacks and whites in public accommodations, facilities, and conveyances (Bennett, 256).

Note: Historians trace the origin of "Jim Crow," referring to legalized segregation, to a white comedian who performed during the antebellum years. Minstrel Thomas

Dartmouth Rice first portrayed a singing, dancing black character, dubbed Jim Crow, on stage in 1832. Wearing ragged clothes and blackening his face, Rice popularized his routine, which included a tune sung in dialect: "Weel a-bout and turn a-bout and do just so; Every time I weel a-bout I jump Jim Crow." According to one legend, Rice developed the character after he saw a crippled black man shuffling a Jim Crow dance, created by slaves in 1690 as a way to bypass religious taboos about dancing. Rice supposedly wore the man's torn clothes and imitated his dance before a receptive audience. See Bennett, 255-256; Woodward, *Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 7; Leon Sloan, in "Ethnic Notions," produced, written and directed by Marlon T. Riggs (Berkeley, CA: California Newsreel, 1992), videocassette.

<sup>69</sup>Railroad companies advertised in most of the black papers. For example, the *Times-Observer* of Topeka carried an advertisement for the Kansas City, Ft. Scott & Memphis R. R., "[p]ractically the only route from the west to all southern cities" ("WHEN YOU GO SOUTH," *Times-Observer*, 4 September 1891).

<sup>70</sup>Ayers, 132-137, *passim*.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 132.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 7-18.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>74</sup>Stephenson, 190.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 190. According to Woodward in *Strange Career of Jim Crow*, newer states, such as Florida, tended to adopt Jim Crow laws earlier than older states (p. 41). The Florida statute required that "All railroad companies doing business in this State shall sell to all respectable negro persons first-class tickets, on application at the same rates white persons are charged, and shall furnish and set apart for the use of such negro persons who purchase such first-class tickets a car or cars in each passenger train, as may be necessary, equally good and provided with the same facility and comfort as or may be provided for whites

using and traveling as passengers on first-class tickets." (Laws 1887, c. 3743, in Murray, 85).

<sup>76</sup>Tennessee (1881) and Florida (1887) were followed by eight other states: Mississippi (1888), Texas (1889), Louisiana (1890), Alabama (1891), Kentucky (1891), Arkansas (1891), and Georgia (1891). The second surge of laws were passed by other states near the end of the decade: South Carolina (1898), North Carolina (1899), Virginia (1899), and Maryland (1904), in Stephenson, 190-191.

<sup>77</sup>Leslie Fischel, Jr., "The African-American Experience," in *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America*, ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1996), 151-152.

<sup>78</sup>C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 15; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "The Black Church: A Gender Perspective," in *African-American Religion: Interpretative Essays in History and Culture*, ed. Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Roboteau, 202-225 (New York: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>79</sup>Cleveland Gazette, 11 July 1891.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.; New York Age, 25 July 1891; Baltimore Afro-American, 18 January 1902.

<sup>81</sup>Southern Argus, 13 August 1891. See Footnote 65.

<sup>82</sup>Cleveland Gazette, 17 May 1902.

<sup>83</sup>For newspaper reports of such incidents, see New York Age, 25 July 1891; Indianapolis Freeman, 21 May 1892; Cleveland Gazette, 19 October 1895; Baltimore Afro-American Ledger, 13 January 1902.

<sup>84</sup>Indianapolis Freeman, 24 May 1890. Most state statutes required railroad companies to provide equal accommodations and charge the same price for blacks and whites. Those who paid first-class fare, however often did not receive first-class accommodations. Even before segregation laws required trains to seat black and white passengers in separate cars, passenger trains usually

carried two classes of cars. Generally women and men who did not use tobacco rode in first-class coaches, or parlor cars. Carpet covered the floor, passengers sat on upholstered seats, and water was available. Passengers, including men who used tobacco, men traveling without women, and those who could not afford a first-class ticket, rode in the second-class car. This car, often referred to as the smoking car and located directly behind the engine, had hard seats, poor ventilation, and tobacco juice-covered floors (See Ayers, 139-40). Some reported that such accommodations in second-class cars were filthy, and "mean men of the whites are allowed to enter one of these compartments where a complete saturnalia of drunkenness and the vile use of profanity are indulged in" (Cleveland *Gazette*, 17 May 1902).

<sup>85</sup>Among the numerous newspapers received by Kansas' black newspapers were the Memphis (Tenn.) *Free Speech*, the *New York Age*, the *Chicago Appeal*, the *Omaha Progress*, the *Indianapolis Freeman*, the *Washington (D.C.) Bee*, and the *Cleveland Gazette*.

<sup>86</sup>*Voice of Missions*, edited by Bishop Henry M. Turner and published monthly and semi-monthly, was the official organ of the Missionary Department of the A. M. E. Church.

<sup>87</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 10 March 1894.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>In 1887, W. H. Councill, president of the state school in Alabama, and A.M.E. minister W. H. Heard from Charleston, South Carolina, received national news coverage when they brought cases before the Interstate Commerce Commission after being forced to leave the first-class coach despite having purchased a first-class ticket. In both cases, the commission ruled that segregation was not against the law, but passengers who paid for first-class, whether black or white, should receive equal accommodations (*New York Times*, 3 July 1887; 30 July 1887; Meier, 71-72, 209).

<sup>91</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 10 March 1894.

<sup>92</sup>Leavenworth Advocate, 27 December 1890.

<sup>93</sup>Historic Times, 10 October 1891.

<sup>94</sup>Journalist Ralph W. Tyler was the private secretary to the proprietor of the *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, one of the most influential and prosperous daily papers of central Ohio (*Southern Argus*, 20 August 1891). His columns appeared in numerous black newspapers, including the *Southern Argus* of Baxter Springs, Kansas; *Historic Times* of Lawrence, Kansas; the *Cleveland Gazette*; and the *State Capital* of Springfield, Illinois.

<sup>95</sup>David A. Gerber, *Black Ohio and the Color Line, 1860-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 349.

<sup>96</sup>The *Cleveland Gazette* reported instances when trains entered Ohio from Kentucky and Virginia, with "insulting and obnoxious placards reading THIS CAR FOR WHITE PEOPLE ONLY," still posted to distinguish cars for white and black passengers (*Cleveland Gazette*, 20 September 1902).

<sup>97</sup>*Southern Argus*, 20 August 1891.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 19 November 1891.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>Exchange excerpt in *Southern Argus*, 22 October 1891.

<sup>103</sup>*Southern Argus*, 22 October 1891.

<sup>104</sup>*American Citizen*, 17 February 1893; *Atchison Blade*, 18 February 1893.

<sup>105</sup>*American Citizen*, 17 February 1893.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 23 January 1893.

<sup>107</sup>Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 25 February 1893; *Kansas State Ledger*, 24 February 1893. In 1899, another bill requiring separate coaches for black and white passengers was defeated in Missouri in 1899 (*American Citizen*, 28 April 1899). Prior to publication of the Stephenson article in 1909, Missouri was the only Southern state that had not passed a Jim Crow railway law (p. 191).

<sup>108</sup>*American Citizen*, 17 February 1893.

<sup>109</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 24 February 1893.

<sup>110</sup>Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, 24, 69.

<sup>111</sup>*Cleveland Gazette*, 19 May 1988.

<sup>112</sup>Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 9 February 1895. According to Turner, the treatment of blacks at the Columbian Exposition supported his argument for blacks emigrating to Africa.

<sup>113</sup>Elliott M. Rudwick and August Meier, "Black Man in the 'White City': Negroes and the Columbian Exposition, 1893," *Phylon* 26 (Winter 1965): 354-361.

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, 354-358.

<sup>115</sup>To coincide with the World's Fair, the annual National Afro-American Press Association meeting was held in Chicago. Kansas journalists listed on the program were Mary E. Nero, who represented the *American Citizen*; W. D. Driver, working for the *Indianapolis Freeman*, delivered the welcome; C. H. J. Taylor presented an address (*American Citizen*, 22 September 1893).

<sup>116</sup>*American Citizen*, 31 March 1893.

<sup>117</sup>Rudwick and Meier, 357. In Kansas, the Leavenworth Advocate endorsed a separate exhibit area for African Americans, while the *American Citizen* wanted blacks represented in exhibits throughout the fair (Leavenworth Advocate, 20 December 1890).

<sup>118</sup>For an example of the notice by Wells and Douglass published in black newspapers, see Parsons *Weekly Blade*, 25 March 1893.

<sup>119</sup>Topeka Call, 26 March 1893, 2 April 1893; Afro-American Advocate, Coffeyville, 14 April 1893; 5 May 1893; Atchison Blade, 25 March 1893; Parsons Weekly Blade, 25 March 1893. At least one Kansas paper, the *Kansas State Ledger*, remained neutral in its support of the project.

<sup>120</sup>Parsons Weekly Blade, 29 April 1893.

<sup>121</sup>American Citizen, 14 July 1893.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid.

<sup>123</sup>Alfreda M. Duster, ed., *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 117.

<sup>124</sup>American Citizen, 21 April 1893. The American Citizen switched its position after several black women were scheduled at the end of a program, and the benches for the audience were empty. The Citizen suggested that, rather than ignoring the day, perhaps African Americans should "muster our best talent and make it the grandest day of the whole 160 days so that we can point with pride to the 25th of August 1893 to our children and tell them that in spite of every difficulty, the Negroes of the United states demonstrated to the world that they could rise superior to hate, prejudice, and oppression of the whites of America and furnish the grandest program of the whole series" (25 August 1893).

<sup>125</sup>Parsons Weekly Blade, 25 March 1893.

<sup>126</sup>Topeka Call, 7 May 1893.

<sup>127</sup>For example, see ad for the Great Rock Island Route to Chicago and other Eastern cities. The route "runs all regular trains to Englewood suburban station, close to World's Fair grounds, and you can save time and trouble by getting off at that point and avoid the crowd in the city" (*Kansas State Ledger*, 24 March 1893).

<sup>128</sup>Julie K. Ross, "World's Columbian Exposition: The Official Fair, A History" [online], 1996, accessed 1 July

2000, available from <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA96/WCE/history.html>; Internet.

<sup>129</sup>*American Citizen*, 19 May 1893.

<sup>130</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 29 April 1893.

<sup>131</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 27 October 1893. While in Chicago, Guy also attended the meeting of the Afro-American Press Association, headed by John Mitchell of the Richmond (Va.) *Planet*.

<sup>132</sup>*Ibid.*, 27 October 1893.

<sup>133</sup>Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 3-6.

<sup>134</sup>Among the social historians in the late-nineteenth century who promoted "black peril" was Philip A. Bruce, who wrote *The Plantation Negro as a Freeman* in 1889. Bruce was the brother-in-law of Southern writer Thomas Nelson Page.

<sup>135</sup>Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1984), 27.

<sup>136</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 27 October 1893.

<sup>137</sup>Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, ed. Jacqueline Jones Royster (Boston: Bedford books, 1997), 206. Two pamphlets written by Ida B. Wells-Barnett contained contradictory figures about the number of African Americans lynched in 1892. Wells-Barnett put the number of blacks killed that year at 160 in "A Red Record" (1895), while she noted 241 "Negroes murdered by mobs" in the 1892 statistics cited in "Mob Rule in New Orleans" (1900). See Royster, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings*, 87, 206.

<sup>138</sup>Williamson, 117. According to Williamson, more than 80 percent of the lynchings in the 1890s occurred in fourteen Southern states, though he does not list the specific states. The 1918 report on lynching by the

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People categorized sixteen states as "The South." Those states accounted for nearly 84 percent of recorded lynchings from 1889-1898: Alabama (163), Louisiana (156), Mississippi (152), Texas (143), Georgia (130), Tennessee (115), Arkansas (111), Kentucky (93), Florida (68), South Carolina (64), Oklahoma (56), Virginia (51), North Carolina (24), West Virginia (15), Maryland (10), and Delaware (0). See *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918* (New York: NAACP, 1919; Reprint, Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969), 34-35.

Note: Many lynchings in Southern rural areas, however, were not recorded. See Williamson, 118; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior of the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 403.

<sup>139</sup> *Thirty Years of Lynching*, 30. In 1918 the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People documented more than 1,200 blacks lynched during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The report is based on records kept by the Chicago Tribune and Tuskegee Institute, and records maintained by *The Crisis* and the NAACP after 1912. Each incident was investigated, and nearly 200 were not included in the report tabulations because not enough facts about the specific episodes were available.

<sup>140</sup> *National Reflector*, 17 July 1897.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> In a notice announcing the 1893 National Afro-American Press Association meeting in Chicago, President John Mitchell Jr. informed editors that the black press must continue calling for sympathy to bereaved families of lynching victims and condemnation for the guilty parties (*American Citizen*, 25 August 1893).

<sup>143</sup> For an example, see *Leavenworth Advocate*, 1 February 1890.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 January 1890.

<sup>145</sup> *Leavenworth Advocate*, 18 January 1890.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid.

<sup>147</sup>Sarah A. Soule, "Populism and Black Lynching in Georgia, 1890-1900," *Social Forces* 71, no. 2 (December 1992): 431-499. The practice of summary and extra-legal methods in the United States developed during colonial times. The origin of the term "lynch law" was credited to Colonel Charles Lynch of Virginia. In the late 1700s, Lynch, along with his associates, determined the guilt of Tories, often charged with horse stealing, without a trial and inflicted a punishment of thirty-nine lashes. The practice of lynching was taken westward as emigrants settled in the frontier. As capital punishment, the term "lynching" came about in the 1850s when summary justice methods were applied to desperate white criminals in frontier areas west of the Mississippi. Similar practices were adopted against blacks after the Civil War. See James Elbert Cutler, *Lynch-Law: An Investigation Into the History of Lynching in the United States* (Originally published 1905, n. p.; Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1969), 23-31, 89, 135.

<sup>148</sup>W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993), 17-19. For example, sixty men, "masked and well-mounted," hung two black men in Warrenton, Virginia (*New York Times*, 19 March 1892). A mob of 200 men near Nevada, Missouri, took a man accused of murder from jail and "a dozen ready hands pulled the rope, and he died without a kick or struggle" (*New York Times*, 24 January 1892).

<sup>149</sup>Wyatt-Brown, 453; Giddings, 27-28; Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), 139.

<sup>150</sup>Williamson, 111.

<sup>151</sup>Bettina Aptheker, "Woman Suffrage and the Crusade Against Lynching, 1890-1920," in *Woman's Legacy: Essays on Race, Sex, and Class in American History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 53-76.

<sup>152</sup>Aleen J. Ratzlaff, "Coverage of Lynching in Selected Mainstream Newspapers, 1892-1894," paper presented at the

Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression (November 1999), 6-12.

<sup>153</sup>W. J. Johnson, Topeka correspondent, *American Citizen*, 11 March 1892.

<sup>154</sup>For examples, see the *New York Times*, 2 February 1893, 3 February 1893, 5 February 1893, 8 February 1893; *New York Sun*, 2 February 1893, excerpted in "A Red Record," in *Royster, Southern Horrors*, 93-96.

<sup>155</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 4 February 1893, *Kansas State Ledger*, 10 February 1893.

<sup>156</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 18 February 1893.

<sup>157</sup>Wells, in *Royster, Southern Horrors*, 91-98. While Wells's investigation of the Paris, Texas, lynching pointed to Smith as being responsible for the girl's death, interviews by Wells with townspeople indicated the circumstances about the crime itself were "shamefully exaggerated" (p. 92). For example, Wells found no evidence that the girl was sexually assaulted before she was killed, yet people had circulated descriptive reports about mutilation of the girl's body.

<sup>158</sup>*Duster*, 47-48. Two days before the lynching authorities had arrested and jailed the men on false charges. A mob of seventy-five seized the three from jail, took them outside the city in the early morning hours, and shot them. As was often the case, those who perpetrated the Memphis lynchings were never arrested indicted or tried in court for the killings. As an example of the coverage by a mainstream newspaper, see *New York Times*, 10 March 1892.

<sup>159</sup>*Royster*, 18. According to Wells-Barnett, this incident, detailed in her autobiography and the pamphlets "Southern Horrors," "The Reason Why," and "A Red Record," influenced her life's call and mission. See *Duster*, 47.

<sup>160</sup>*American Citizen*, 11 March 1892.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid. Davis was the paper's Kansas City correspondent. The poem by Davis also ran in the *Atchison Blade* (*Atchison Blade*, 2 September 1892).

<sup>162</sup> *Thirty Years of Lynching*, 64-65. The following list identifies the Africans lynched in Kansas between 1890-1899: Hugh Henry (alias James Thompson), Larned, 14 September 1892; Commodore True, Hiawatha, 29 November 1892; Dana Adams, Salina, 20 April 1893; John Wilson, Leavenworth, 21 August 1893; Jeff Luggle, Cherokee, 24 April 1894; Charles Williams, Galena, 25 April 1899; George Mills, 30 October 1899, Weir.

<sup>163</sup> *National Reflector*, 3 July 1897. Records of lynchings in Kansas have been kept since 1850. The highest number occurred from 1860-1870 when 96 men were killed. In Kansas, the primary causes for lynching were charges of horse stealing, murder, rape, and robbery. After the migration of blacks to Kansas in the Great Exodus of 1879, the incidents of lynchings of African Americans increased. According to records, a total of 38 blacks were lynched in Kansas from 1850-1930. See Genevieve Yost, "History of Lynchings in Kansas," *The Kansas Historical Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1933): 182-219.

<sup>164</sup> *American Citizen*, 16 September 1892.

<sup>165</sup> *Kansas State Ledger*, 23 September 1892.

<sup>166</sup> The first published account of the lynching in the *Atchison Blade* came from the mainstream press (17 September 1892).

<sup>167</sup> *Kansas State Ledger* 14 April 1893.

<sup>168</sup> *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 29 April 1893.

<sup>169</sup> *Kansas State Ledger*, 5 May 1893; 12 May 1893. The *Ledger* and other black newspapers mentioned "white caps" in connection with vigilante mobs, such as the Ku-Klux Klan. In the early 1880s, a "Ku-Klux Klan element" was reportedly present in Kansas (*Cleveland Gazette*, 20 October 1883). The *Cleveland Gazette* stated in 1888 that "[t]he 'White Caps' are causing the white people of some parts of Southern Indiana and Illinois about as much trouble as the 'Ku-Klux' did our people in some parts of the South. The former are but an outgrowth of the latter, and if they do nothing else will perhaps teach some parts of the country the fallacy of

allowing organized bodies or single persons to transgress the law with impunity" (*Cleveland Gazette*, 28 July 1888).

As to the origin of the term "white caps," one primary source referred to "an influential family in Kerry (Ireland), who acted a similar part as Judge Lynch in America. When neighbours became unruly, the white caps visited them during the night and beat them soundly. Their example was followed about a hundred years ago in other parts of Ireland." See E. Cobham Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 1898, accessed 1 July 2000, available from <http://www.bartleby.com/81/17420.html>; Internet.

<sup>170</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 12 May 1893.

<sup>171</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 29 April 1893.

<sup>172</sup>*Ibid.*, 27 May 1893.

<sup>173</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 27 May 1893.

<sup>175</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 23 September 1892.

<sup>176</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 24 September 1892.

<sup>177</sup>*National Reflector*, 7 August 1897.

<sup>178</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 11 May 1894.

<sup>179</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 3 August 1889.

<sup>180</sup>*National Reflector*, 19 March 1898.

<sup>181</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 17 April 1897.

<sup>183</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup>*National Reflector*, 26 June 1897.

<sup>185</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup>Ibid., 29 May 1897; *American Citizen*, Kansas City, Kansas, 4 June 1897; Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 74.

<sup>188</sup>*National Reflector*, 29 May 1897; *American Citizen*, 4 June 1897.

<sup>189</sup>Ibid., 26 June 1897.

<sup>190</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 26 June 1897.

<sup>191</sup>*National Reflector*, 17 July 17, 1897. Jones had not endorsed Bruce's candidacy for register of the treasury (*National Reflector*, 24 July 1897). Jones reported that the *National Reflector* was "stricken from the exchange list of the Leavenworth Herald. It is a terrible shock, but we will endeavor to stand it" (*National Reflector*, 30 October 1897).

<sup>192</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 17 August 1895.

<sup>193</sup>*National Reflector*, 23 October 1897.

<sup>194</sup>Linda O. McMurry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 181, 217-218.

<sup>195</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 30 June 1894.

<sup>196</sup>Ibid., 16 June 1894.

<sup>197</sup>Ibid., 5 January 1895.

<sup>198</sup>Ibid. After Wells returned from her second English trip, Bruce had criticized her for "telling the race editors what to do." Such an approach characterized what he considered as the "egotistic, self-appointed, bossing principle which seems to underlie Ida B's makeup" (*Leavenworth Herald*, 1 September 1894).

<sup>199</sup>Reprinted in *Leavenworth Herald*, 22 June 1895.

<sup>200</sup>Ibid., 27 July 27 1895.

<sup>201</sup>Ibid., 26 January 1895.

<sup>202</sup>Ibid.

<sup>203</sup>Following Wells's return from England, she went on the lecture circuit in the United States, speaking in cities and towns across the East and Pacific coasts as well as the Midwest. See Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 218-38; *People's Friend*, Wichita, 18 September 1894.

<sup>204</sup>Leavenworth *Herald*, 15 June 1895.

<sup>205</sup>Ibid.

<sup>206</sup>*National Baptist World*, 31 August 1894.

<sup>207</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 23 June 1894. In later years, Wells attributed the 1893 beginning of the decline in the number of lynchings as evidence of the impact that the U.S. press had on public opinion, sparked by her antilynching efforts. See Duster, 189.

<sup>208</sup>Ibid., 28 January 1893.

<sup>209</sup>Ibid., 27 January 1894.

<sup>210</sup>Summer E. Stevens and Owen V. Johnson, "From Black Politics to Black Community: Harry C. Smith and the *Cleveland Gazette*," *Journalism Quarterly* 67 (Winter 1990): 1090-1102; Bernell E. Tripp, "The Media and Community Cohesiveness," *The Significance of the Media in American History*, eds. James D. Startt and Wm. David Sloan, (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 1994), 147-167.

## CHAPTER 6 UPLIFT THROUGH EDUCATION AND BUSINESS

In 1897, the Leavenworth *Herald* reported that Lutie Lytle, a graduate of Central Tennessee College, had opened a law office in her hometown of Topeka.<sup>1</sup> The paper praised the young attorney's "sensible" decision to return to Kansas "instead of going to New York, or to Washington, where her ambition would have been crushed by a lack of appreciation of her talents."<sup>2</sup>

Reflecting on her resolve to study law, Lytle asserted:

I conceived the idea of studying law in a printing office where I worked for years as a compositor. I read the newspaper exchanges a great deal and became impressed with the knowledge of the fact that my own people especially were the victims of legal ignorance. I resolved to fathom its depths and penetrate its mysteries and intricacies in hopes of being a benefit to my people.<sup>3</sup>

Lytle's newspaper work dated back to the summer of 1893, when the *American Citizen* of Kansas City hired her as a compositor on its production staff.<sup>4</sup> Once on the job, Lytle, then 19, apparently soon mastered the skill of deftly setting lead type to prepare the weekly paper for the presses and distributing copies to area communities.<sup>5</sup> In

addition to typesetting local happenings, Lytle and her coworkers reset, letter by letter, articles and excerpts clipped by the editor from newspaper exchanges within the state and across the country.<sup>6</sup> This task gave Lytle opportune moments to read various news reports and editorials, thereby increasing her awareness of inequities faced by a majority of African Americans in the 1890s.<sup>7</sup>

Even as Lytle worked at the *Citizen*, and later at the *Kansas Blackman* in Topeka, several of the state's black newspapers pointed with pride to her academic and professional achievements.<sup>8</sup> When she chose to further her academic studies at Central Tennessee in 1895, that support continued as the press acknowledged each accomplishment that brought merit to the black community at large.<sup>9</sup> After she completed law school, a Topeka newspaper carried the news when Lytle successfully passed the Tennessee bar exam.<sup>10</sup>

The newspapers' resolute support of Lytle's undertakings, whether attending school or working on the newspaper, illustrates one of the ways the press prodded young African Americans to pursue higher education or receive vocational training as a means of realizing a

better way of life. Lutie Lytle was only one of many young people who benefited through contact and involvement with newspapers produced in black communities of Kansas.<sup>11</sup> Such backing reflected a perspective held by middle-class blacks during the late-nineteenth century: the necessity of education to raise the social status and increase the economic agency of African Americans.

As community leaders and business owners with goals for individual and collective betterment, newspaper publishers and editors invested training and employment in young people with promise. These journalists' investment reflected their focus on uplift to advance the race and conquer prejudicial barriers. This chapter discusses the press's ideology of viewing education and business ownership as the means to enhance their community and to bring about mutual regard between whites and blacks.<sup>12</sup>

Goals for advancing the race were integral to late-nineteenth-century uplift ideology, which connoted social mobility and a positive self-identity for African Americans.<sup>13</sup> Racial uplift embraced economic self-help, education, and evangelical reform, as well as political and equal rights.<sup>14</sup> Assuming that differences of culture and

class, rather than biology, formed the basis for racial inferiority, the ideology of uplift made a case for the humanity of blacks.<sup>15</sup> The black elite and middle class pointed to class distinctions as evidence of racial advancement, particularly apparent in an individual's character and behavior.

As members of an emerging black middle class, the journalists exemplified a commitment to learning--earning teaching certificates or university degrees, and some apprenticing young people in their newspaper businesses. Newspapers became forums where editors, contributing writers, and readers discussed issues and raised concerns about educating children and young adults in their communities, where about a third of the statewide black population was illiterate.<sup>16</sup> The papers carried content devoted to young readers, coverage of school activities, and reports of academic accomplishments, underscoring the editors' concerted efforts to support and contribute to the tutelage of the next generation.

While the editors typified those who believed education was necessary to bring about betterment of the race, support for the notion of uplift was not unique to African

Americans living in the late-nineteenth century. According to one historian, the concept originated during the antebellum period when free blacks, excluded from white social institutions, created churches, schools, political conventions, and fraternal organizations as a means for bringing about freedom and social advancement.<sup>17</sup> Even then, education was considered crucial for improving living conditions and raising the status of African Americans, a view documented by the black press of that era.<sup>18</sup>

Late-nineteenth-century newspapers in Kansas expressed a similar perspective, as evidenced in the *People's Friend* of Wichita:

We believe [sic] that education, property and practical religion will eventually give the Negroes of this country all the rights and privileges enjoyed by the other citizens, and our interest can best be served by bending all our energies to secure these advantages, rather than by dwelling on the past, by fault-finding and complaining, keep out of debt, buy land, be temperate, and send your children to school regularly.<sup>19</sup>

Journalists, such as B. K. Bruce Jr. of the Leavenworth *Herald*, believed "the colored press [was] one of the most powerful agencies that labors for the upbuilding of the race."<sup>20</sup> Not only did newspapers supply readers with news and vital information, but also press chronicled "the

progress in science, literature and art, [and to] note the financial and material advancement of the colored people of the state and Union."<sup>21</sup> The press acted as a necessary tool for African Americans in pursuing intellectual and economic progress.<sup>22</sup> Bruce believed the dependence on the press would only become greater as the race continued to advance.<sup>23</sup>

When influential *North Star* editor Frederick Douglass died in February 1895, blacks and whites looked for someone to take on his role as spokesman for African Americans. Educator Booker T. Washington assumed this leadership position following his Atlanta Exposition speech in September. However, Washington's philosophy of accommodation contrasted with the stance of Douglass, who had advocated for full citizenship rights despite repeated setbacks and mounting barriers of segregation and discrimination after Reconstruction.<sup>24</sup>

Washington preached a conciliatory message of economic progress, self-help, industrial education, and racial solidarity. Support for industrial and agricultural education, taught at Washington's alma mater, Hampton Institute in Virginia, and his own school, Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, became a sentiment widely held by

many black and white leaders who established schools for blacks after the Civil War.<sup>25</sup> Such schools not only focused on manual training, but they instilled values of thrift, industry, and morality.<sup>26</sup>

Black leaders, a number being journalists, were divided in their reaction to Washington's accommodationist approach.<sup>27</sup> In light of the overwhelmingly positive response from the mainstream press following Washington's speech in Atlanta, Calvin Chase of the *Washington (D.C.) Bee* wrote that the Tuskegee Wizard's address "was the death to the Afro-American and elevating to the white people. What fool wouldn't applaud the downfall of his aspiring competitor?"<sup>28</sup> Harry C. Smith, long-time editor of the *Cleveland Gazette*, also opposed Washington's stance, favoring integration at all costs.<sup>29</sup>

In defense against attacks on Washington from Chase, Smith, and other black leaders, *Colored American* editor Edward E. Cooper sent Washington a letter after the Atlanta speech.<sup>30</sup> Cooper, one of Washington's consistent supporters, wrote: "You have a champion in THE COLORED AMERICAN at all times. The more these fellows bray about your speech, the greater the speech appears."<sup>31</sup> Washington sought to maintain

close ties to Cooper and other black journalists, although he remained behind the scenes, where he subsidized several papers, including the *New York Age*, that advanced his views.<sup>32</sup>

One of Washington's harshest critics, W. E. B. Du Bois, argued for higher education for African Americans, along with demands for political and civil rights. While Du Bois saw value in a "broad system of common schools supplemented through industrial training," he believed that young people should be educated according to their ability.<sup>33</sup> Du Bois contended that Washington asked blacks to give up "higher education of Negro youth."<sup>34</sup> According to Du Bois, those capable "by character and talent," the black intelligentsia, should be college-educated in preparation for leadership as educators, clergy, and professionals among the masses.<sup>35</sup> "If white people need colleges to furnish teachers, ministers, lawyers, and doctors, do black people need nothing of the sort?" questioned Du Bois, the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard.<sup>36</sup>

Nationally, those associated with Washington took on labels of "conservatives" or "Bookerites," while Washington's critics, led by Du Bois, were referred to as

"radicals" or "anti-Bookerites."<sup>37</sup> The leadership of African American communities in Kansas, while strongly influenced by Washington's idea of young people learning employable skills, supported opportunities for vocational training of blacks. Newspapers reported on Washington's work at Tuskegee Institute, praising his progress in acquiring property, livestock, and equipment reportedly valued at \$200,000.<sup>38</sup> Tuskegee, according to one Kansas editor, exemplified the kind of institution black leaders should promote "throughout the land, instead of harping upon immigration and division in politics as being the ways in which to solve the ever vexatious race problems."<sup>39</sup>

While some newspapers recognized worth in industrial education, a number endorsed Du Bois' premise of higher education. A writer for the *Atchison Blade*, which consistently endorsed liberal arts learning, viewed guarantees for higher education as an integral aspect of political freedom. The correspondent reasoned:

If all men are free, morally free, in the determination of their actions, and politically free through their participation in the government of the society of which they form a part, is it not evident that they all have the right to a higher education which will enlighten and emancipate their mind and will?<sup>40</sup>

According to the *Blade*, every newspaper in Kansas "published in the interest of the race" had a responsibility to urge high school graduates to further their education.<sup>41</sup> Touting the intellectual merits of attending college, the *Parsons Weekly Blade* agreed: "The college life of every student, whether white or black, is indissolubly associated with his highest ideals. The very functions of school and colleges challenge enthusiasm and admiration; they exist to develop life, light and power."<sup>42</sup>

#### Power through Education

The black press of Kansas portrayed education, broadly defined as academic learning and practical skills training, as central to the advancement of the race.<sup>43</sup> In an article in the *Historic Times* of Lawrence, a Salina minister wrote: "I do not mean to be simply educated in books, but also in morality, industry and refinement . . . . Education is power."<sup>44</sup> The press emphasized education for children as a long-term answer for solving problems associated with race, conveying the obligation and responsibility of black communities to nurture their young people.<sup>45</sup> Pointing to parents, as well as the schools, the *Atchison Blade* editor wrote: "Our children are what we make them."<sup>46</sup>

As one way of affirming the academic efforts of boys and girls, the newspapers published tributes of school-related accomplishments. High school graduation was a particularly worthy achievement because only a few black students successfully completed their secondary programs. The Leavenworth Advocate announced that Dora Evans, ranking among the top of her class, earned "the honor" of being the first black student to graduate from the high school in Kansas City.<sup>47</sup> However, in its coverage of the event, the Advocate reported an unfortunate incident that marred the occasion. On stage, a classmate refused to sit next to Evans, who was chosen by her peers to be one of the class speakers. "It seems neither time, tide nor place has any effect upon that most unreasonable of all things, prejudice," the Advocate declared.<sup>48</sup> In coming to her defense, the newspaper retorted: "Miss Evans towers above that pigmy [sic] [the offending classmate] in everything which goes to make a lady or gentleman. We wish her success."<sup>49</sup>

Such discriminatory actions triggered outcries from the press. With a watchful eye on school administrators and faculty, the newspapers monitored activities in the

schools, taking up the cause of black students, as well as black families, if it appeared their rights were violated. When only two of twenty black students attending Lawrence High School successfully passed their courses, the Atchison *Blade* voiced suspicion about the exam results:

This looks very strange . . . . Many of this number were considered to be quite invincible; it happened they did not pass. There is a screw loose somewhere. More colored students in our High [sic] schools in Kansas failed this year than ever before. Prejudice seeks its level.<sup>50</sup>

Although African Americans encountered prejudice in public school settings, they were not barred from furthering their education.<sup>51</sup> A number of young people chose to enroll in one of the state's normal institutes.<sup>52</sup> Students at normal institutions attended classes primarily designed to prepare them for teaching. Some schools were designated exclusively for a black student body, including Colored Normal School of Quindaro, established in 1872 as part of Freedman's University.<sup>53</sup> In 1881, the African Methodist Episcopal Church took charge of the school, identifying its mission as a vocational/college preparatory institution and later renaming it Western University.<sup>54</sup>

In 1882, the Iowa Yearly Meeting of Friends founded Hobson Normal Institute in Parsons, Kansas. The school was

established for training teachers and providing preparatory programs for African Americans from the Southern-border states.<sup>55</sup> The Parsons *Blade* carried ads for Hobson, listing class offerings and certifications available through the school.<sup>56</sup> Several young people associated with the *Blade* earned teaching certificates from Hobson, including Aritha Dorsey, sister of editor J. Monroe Dorsey of the *Blade*. Another young woman, Minnie Waller of Lawrence, eldest daughter of *American Citizen* editor John L. Waller, completed her certification in 1889.<sup>57</sup>

Often, the background of the editors appeared to influence their outlook on education. While a number of editors completed teaching certification programs, several went on to earn college degrees. Still others received training in apprentice settings.

As a professional educator and a University of Kansas graduate, B. K. Bruce of Leavenworth took a decided stand about the value of education. Leavenworth *Advocate* editors Bruce and W. B. Townsend, who earned a law degree at the University of Kansas in 1891, urged high school graduates to take an interest and "complete their education" by attending the university in Lawrence.<sup>58</sup>

Through the *Advocate*, the editors advised: "All of the departments are open to our people and admission is FREE. The only cost is for board and books, the tuition being free."<sup>59</sup> By September 1890, the *Advocate* noted that "six colored students (four doing collegiate work, one in law department, one in medical department)" were enrolled. The paper urged more to consider attending because "good board [was] available for \$3."<sup>60</sup>

Economic factors were not the only advantage for students who enrolled in university classes in Lawrence. "Wellington," alias George Gross, the Lawrence correspondent for several newspapers, promoted the academic and social activities available to black students at the university. Not only would they benefit from learning in the classroom, but the cultural life of Lawrence's black community offered "literary societies in the various churches, . . . the Progressive Club and its monthly lectures, . . . and other clubs [that furnished] ample instruction and amusement for all."<sup>61</sup>

In the early 1890s, high school graduates from Lawrence, Atchison, Leavenworth, and Arkansas City formed a small corps of black students at the University of Kansas.<sup>62</sup>

When one of the group, Grant Brown of Atchison, was accepted at the school, newspapers in Leavenworth, Kansas City, and Lawrence joined in a chorus of praise.<sup>63</sup> Over the years, Brown had written for area papers as "Ichabod." He continued that practice as a student in Lawrence, reporting on debates, literary society meetings, and lectures attended by those connected with the university and associated with the city's black community.<sup>64</sup>

Before finishing his pre-med course work in 1893, Brown and two other young men founded the *Atchison Blade*, with Brown handling much of the editorial responsibilities and collecting payments for subscriptions.<sup>65</sup> Under Brown's editorship, the *Blade* devoted coverage to literary and educational events and issues, regularly running contributions from educators and special correspondents active in academic circles.

Like Brown and other journalist contemporaries, F. L. Jeltz of the *Kansas State Ledger* demonstrated an interest in Topeka's public school system, having taught in several school settings. Prior to founding the *Ledger*, Jeltz acquired teaching experience in Mississippi and Florida schools before migrating to Kansas in the 1880s. Once in

Topeka, he secured a teaching position at the city's Oakland School.<sup>66</sup>

Jeltz's training as an educator was reflected in the editorial stance of the *Kansas State Ledger*. In particular, he demanded that well-qualified instructors teach the children. As a parent and former teacher, Jeltz defended his authority to speak about school issues. In the midst of a heated exchange over hiring practices of teachers for black schools, Jeltz wrote:

The editor of this paper can afford to say a good deal on the school subject as he has four girls to attend, and is very careful as to who should instruct them. There is a privilege accorded every citizen; and there is a time when a citizen should take advantage of the same and this is our time; and we are going to have our say as to who should teach Negro schools.<sup>67</sup>

While most readers shared Jeltz's desire for quality teachers, citizens among black communities were divided over the "separate-mixed" school issue. Widely discussed through the press, school segregation received much public attention, particularly in Topeka and Leavenworth, where children attended segregated primary schools and integrated secondary schools. In 1893, the *Ledger* carried a series of letters written by W. J. Johnson, principal of Madison School in Topeka and the city's correspondent for the

American Citizen of Kansas City. According to Johnson and other separate-school supporters, mixed schools eliminated employment options for black teachers because "colored teachers can only find positions in those schools which are exclusively for colored children."<sup>68</sup>

Statewide, where more than 12,000 teachers taught in common schools, less than 100 were African Americans.<sup>69</sup> Most of the black teachers who found positions taught in the northeast counties of Shawnee, Wyandotte, Leavenworth, and Atchison. Having separate schools, however, did not guarantee appointments of African Americans as teachers. Whites held some positions in black schools, a practice Johnson condemned.<sup>70</sup>

Arguments for separate schools also focused on conditions that affected children's learning. In mixed schools, students often were subjected to hostile attitudes from peers and teachers. The *Parsons Weekly Blade* challenged an editorial in the *Denver (Colo.) Statesman-Exponent*, which "unmercifully condemned any one who would advocate separate schools."<sup>71</sup> The *Blade* urged readers to consider the long-term implications of supporting integrated primary schools. In light of pervasive prejudice

directed toward blacks, separate schools offered their children a safe environment that was more conducive to learning.<sup>72</sup>

Mixed schools also denied African Americans the "honor, and advantage, and duty" to "train their own offspring," argued the *Blade*, as well as subjecting children to "biting, stinging hatred" from prejudiced teachers and other students.<sup>73</sup> Until those conditions changed, the *Blade* viewed mixed schools as disadvantageous for young children.

On occasion, issues debated in the black press sometimes made their way into mainstream newspapers. Writing to the Topeka *Daily Capital*, several leaders of the black community responded to the teacher-employment issue Johnson raised in the *Ledger* articles. The letter writers urged citizens, after reading Johnson's arguments, to lend their aid in convincing the school board to halt appointments of white teachers in schools catering only to black children. Summarizing their position, the writers concluded:

We do not wish to draw color lines, but we agree with Professor Johnson that the lines have been drawn for us and against us, and that therefore it is our duty to recognize that fact and act in such a manner as to prove that we can, by remaining on our side of the line build up a people who shall be honored and respected by

those, or the descendants of those, who drew the line against us.<sup>74</sup>

While editors of some newspapers, such as the *Ledger* and the *Parsons Weekly Blade*, backed separate schools, other Kansas journalists disagreed. Leavenworth Advocate editor W. B. Townsend and colleague John L. Waller opposed the color line in schools.<sup>75</sup> "Our greatest obstacle to this cursed separate school system is the colored teachers and their contingent, who secretly organize and watch every movement of the people to break down this discrimination," Townsend lamented.<sup>76</sup> Countering the argument about a lack of teaching jobs, Townsend cited schools in Ohio, New York, and Massachusetts that hired black teachers in white schools. "If colored teachers are competent, their color will cut but little figure in the matter of employment," Townsend reasoned.<sup>77</sup>

In taking expounding their position, Townsend and Waller viewed segregated schools as a civil rights issue.<sup>78</sup> According to the journalists and other supporters of integrated schools, segregated schools denied blacks equal educational opportunities, a privilege guaranteed by law.<sup>79</sup> Townsend argued that African Americans paid taxes "for school purposes," along with "the wealthiest white man in

the city," yet black children were forced to learn in "dilapidated conditions and isolated locations, . . . entirely unfit for school purposes."<sup>80</sup> Through the Advocate's pages, Townsend fanned the school controversy brewing in nearby Tonganoxie in 1889. The school board refused to admit black children, rather setting up an isolated attendance center. Even after District Judge Robert Crozier of Leavenworth ruled students could not be prevented from attending the school because of color, the board refused to change its discriminatory policies.<sup>81</sup> Townsend urged Tonganoxie parents:

[S]end your children right on to the [white] school, pay no attention to the board; and if your children are denied admission, all of you get together, and come to Leavenworth, and get your rights in courts in less time than it takes to write these few lines.<sup>82</sup>

Backing the school board, the white-run Tonganoxie Mirror countered the Advocate's allegations. The Mirror claimed that the board represented the wishes of 90 percent of the whites in town, as well as "about half the colored people if not more."<sup>83</sup> The Advocate rejected such reasoning and reiterated its demand that the school board concede to the law. Accused by the Mirror of "sowing dissension and discord" among the races, the editor responded:

We do not regret the part taken in this school fight, for if we have been the means of detecting and exposing

a systematic plan to deprive our people of their rights in the schools there, we feel amply repaid.<sup>84</sup>

The public exchange between the Tonganoxie *Mirror* and the *Advocate* alerted readers to the issues. In providing a forum for the mixed-separate school issue, the black press solicited reactions from blacks, as well as whites.

With *de jure* segregated schools in first-class cities, the press sought to mobilize support for improving the often-substandard conditions experienced by black children. Many of the students attended classes in inadequate facilities. The press attempted to bring the issue of deteriorating schools to the attention of its readers, as well as the white community.

The Leavenworth *Advocate* described conditions of one school, the North Leavenworth Colored School, as "close to a stinking old muddy creek, with a rail-road running almost directly over the building."<sup>85</sup> The paper urged readers to take a stand for "a place for decent and moral children to begin an education."<sup>86</sup> In a similar fashion, the *Parsons Weekly Blade* exhorted "[e]very colored man and woman [to] come out and get the spirit [of] the move" and attend a special meeting at the A. M. E. church to discuss what action needed to be taken about the "educational facilities of the colored people in our city, and some things of vital importance that we care not to make public yet."<sup>87</sup>

The activism by the press extended beyond awareness of the physical structures of schools. Editors did not hesitate to take a teacher to task. Those teachers charged with acting improperly, black as well as white, became a focus of newspaper coverage. The Leavenworth Advocate urged the school board to suspend a black teacher, J. A. Moore, after he was arrested and charged with "enticing" a former student "away for the purpose of concubinage."<sup>88</sup>

Amid the turmoil of the Moore affair, the Advocate proposed the following action:

This much the board owes to the good name of the schools of this city; they owe that much to the colored patrons of the South Leavenworth school; they owe that much to their constituency, to remove Moore from the school as teacher. Will the board do its duty? The public will see.<sup>89</sup>

At the trial, the young girl, by then obviously pregnant, reportedly said she was "induced by Moore" to Kansas City, where they had sexual intercourse. However, the judge chose to accept Moore's alibi, despite contradictory evidence. On behalf of the community, the Advocate expressed its outrage at the verdict and conveyed its sympathy to the young girl's relatives.<sup>90</sup>

In other efforts aimed to ensure that students studied under well-qualified teachers, B. K. Bruce Jr. assumed leadership. In the Leavenworth Herald, Bruce prodded teachers to attend district and state meetings of the

Kansas State Teachers' Association.<sup>91</sup> Participation would help keep teachers current about education issues and policies. Few black educators chose to attend the conferences because, according to the *Herald* editor, they anticipated discriminatory treatment. Bruce, principal of South Leavenworth Colored School and active in the state organization, claimed that everyone, "colored and white was welcomed at all teachers' meetings."<sup>92</sup>

Besides his concern for the professional development of his colleagues, Bruce found the curriculum taught in the public schools inadequate. His primary criticism focused on history lessons that ignored the contributions of blacks.

In the *Herald*, Bruce wrote:

All the school class of historians are color-blind, so much so that not one is able to see black, hence the only connection the Negro has with the history of the United States is in the capacity of a slave, and even the facts concerning slavery are distorted.<sup>93</sup>

As an example, Bruce cited that according to textbooks used in classes, blacks did not take an active part in the Civil War. On the contrary, Bruce wrote, more than 200,000 black soldiers fought in the war, a fact known by few school teachers or students, white as well as black.

This studied, premeditated effort to exclude the Negro from all honorable mention is occasioned by race prejudice and the fact that school histories are baits to catch either the unsuspecting or the prejudiced.<sup>94</sup>

Bruce asserted that such intentional omissions must be challenged because children should be taught historical truths rather than "little collections of fiction, miscalled history."<sup>95</sup>

Bruce demonstrated his commitment to better children's educational experiences by enlisting community support to provide affordable textbooks. For several legislative sessions, Bruce urged the state to furnish books in public schools at no cost because the price prohibited some black children from attending school.<sup>96</sup> Following a meeting of the Kansas State Teachers' Association criticizing the high cost of books, Bruce asked *Herald* readers to "notify their representatives that something must be done for their relief; the book companies should also be notified that they cannot rob the people any longer."<sup>97</sup>

Even as the press promoted better facilities, qualified teachers, and affordable textbooks, special correspondent Dennis Thompson suggested a pragmatic use of newspapers in school. Thompson asked that teachers acquaint their students with black newspapers produced in their communities, using them as learning tools in the classroom. He believed children should be introduced to the papers so they would understand "race pride," which could nurture a commitment to work toward unity among blacks.<sup>98</sup> If children could appreciate the value of the press in advancing the

race, reading the newspapers would become a habit practiced into adulthood.

To attract young readers, Leavenworth *Herald* editor Bruce, assisted by his wife, added a children's column to the paper. The Bruces intended to "interest boys and girls [in the *Herald*] and, if possible, inculcate the habit of reading. We desire every boy and girl to look for and read the children's column; many valuable items of interest to parents will be found also in the children's column."<sup>99</sup>

The content of the column varied from week to week. Children's essay topics ranged from border disputes in Venezuela to the life cycle of ducks. Short articles, such as those headlined "STIC-TO-IT-IVE-NESS" and "A PENNY-WISE AND POUND FOOLISH," challenged children to develop attributes of persistence and diligence.<sup>100</sup> Other articles were directed toward parents, such as the *Herald*'s caution that "[y]oung people having the opportunity, owe it to the race to improve it by getting as much knowledge of books as possible."<sup>101</sup>

The regular column appeared to be a success. Ichabod, alias Grant Brown, reported that children in Wathena, where he was teaching, were enthusiastic about the *Herald*'s new department. The paper printed a short article on the meaning of Christmas, written by one of Brown's students.<sup>102</sup> Other young readers submitted short stories and essays,

contributions "from the lowest grade up of the best efforts of the children in our public schools."<sup>103</sup>

A number of factors most likely contributed to the educational activism of the press in Leavenworth, Atchison, Topeka, and Kansas City. Not only did the cities have the largest concentrations of African Americans, but also a majority of black teachers were employed in those school districts. In addition, a number of the editors and correspondents from the area studied at the University of Kansas, in close proximity to the northeastern communities. Journalists Townsend, Bruce, and F. L. Jeltz had teaching experience, and they demonstrated a strong commitment to education, with Bruce targeting a range of public school concerns in his newspapers.

#### Black-owned Businesses

While the black press of Kansas, particularly newspapers in the northeast, addressed the issue of education and urged qualified young people to further their studies, the papers nonetheless acknowledged the scarcity of career possibilities once students finished school without employable skills. The "plain unvarnished facts about the Negro's material condition and his social environment," wrote the *Times-Observer*, limited the employment opportunities generally to preaching and teaching.<sup>104</sup> However, available positions for blacks in

churches and schools were limited. The key to attaining economic and social agency and expanding vocational possibilities, according to proponents of uplift ideology, lay in the development of black enterprises through thriftiness, industry, and racial solidarity.<sup>105</sup> This philosophy emphasized promoting economics over political activism.

Leaders nationwide focused on black entrepreneurship, probably an indirect response to overt and covert discrimination experienced by blacks after Reconstruction.<sup>106</sup> Elite and middle-class blacks believed that once they proved themselves by acquiring wealth and respectability, prejudice and discrimination by whites would diminish.<sup>107</sup> In the *Times-Observer*, Topeka lawyer and financier James H. Guy penned an article that exemplified the belief of many middle-class blacks in Kansas communities. Guy contended that only when African Americans became established financially would they "be looked after and cared for, not only by their own race, but others as well."<sup>108</sup>

A prosperous business, while dependent upon hard work by the entrepreneur and black patrons, also benefited the community at large. Guy reasoned:

In every city where there is a sufficient number of colored people to support a business, . . . let all the several businesses be represented. Then let every

colored person in the community patronize those several business's [sic]. . . . [D]o this thing simply because he is black in business and wish to see him prosper, his prosperity is our prosperity.<sup>109</sup>

Wichita editor S. W. Jones voiced similar notions about elevating the race. In both the *National Baptist World* and the *National Reflector*, Jones emphasized the importance of seeking racial solidarity; developing moral character of hard work, frugality and honesty; and establishing business enterprises through industrial education and gainful employment.<sup>110</sup> In fact, Jones suggested that blacks initially take lower-paying jobs, if necessary, to secure employment. "Real downright and straightforward industry will do more to solve the Negro problem than anything else that we can name. The honest and industrious always have the respect of the better classes of society, white or black," Jones wrote.<sup>111</sup>

Black newspapers, such as those edited by Jones, played a significant role in promoting black entrepreneurs and their operations during the late-nineteenth century. Black enterprises could be found throughout Kansas in cities with a significant black population. Lawrence, for example, had a variety of black-owned retail and service businesses, including two grocery stores, several restaurants, a hotel, a "first-class" boot and shoe shop, a doctor's office, and several barbershops.<sup>112</sup> Similar businesses could be found in

## CHAPTER 5 PROTEST AGAINST DISCRIMINATORY BACKLASH

During the summer of 1889, editor W. B. Townsend of the Leavenworth Advocate traveled by train to Mississippi to visit his father, whom he had not seen for twenty-five years. Townsend, who departed from Kansas City, traveled through Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana on his month-long journey.<sup>1</sup> In the Advocate, Townsend reported that, when leaving St. Louis, "although holding a first class ticket, we were driven by a rough and insulting brakeman from the first class coach, to a coach which is generally known in the South as, 'Coon car; or 'special car for colored persons.'"<sup>2</sup> The separate-car arrangement made no sense to Townsend, particularly when "we had the good fortune of one time during our trip, to have one of those 'special cars' entirely at our disposal for twelve hours."<sup>3</sup>

Upon returning to Leavenworth, Townsend offered advice for Advocate readers who might choose to venture southward. He issued the following caution:

When colored ladies and gentlemen go South, they need not spend their money for first class tickets; for they will be compelled to ride in what is known as the 'coon car' and sit in waiting-rooms in depots with signs over their doors, which read thus: For colored people.<sup>4</sup>

news briefs on the local news page. For example, the following one-liner, "Patronize G. H Young's grocery store, 534 N. Water St.," was placed in the Wichita *National Reflector*'s "Around Town" column between a reminder of an upcoming event and an individual on the "sick list."<sup>117</sup>

To promote local businesses, the *Kansas State Ledger* charged for brief sketches of "prominent of the race and business enterprises," written by journalist E. M. Woods of Parsons.<sup>118</sup> Area correspondents included highlights about businesses in their local communities. Along with listing black-owned businesses in Lawrence, the "Rambler" noted "from a business standpoint, everything considered, [those enterprises] are doing better than the colored people in any other city."<sup>119</sup>

Most of those running newspapers not only provided advertisements for other businesses, but they established themselves as viable members of the business community. In 1891, Lawrence businessman and printer Nat Turner Langston joined father Charles H. Langston, the Rev. W. L. Grant, and J. H. Smith to form the Times Publishing Co., which produced the *Historic Times*.<sup>120</sup> Other publishing companies, as well, owned shops that printed weekly newspapers.<sup>121</sup> The papers advertised for their printing services, including meal tickets, pamphlets for societies and other organizations, letterheads, statements, and invitations.<sup>122</sup>

Among those with relatively successful printing plants were editors F. L. Jeltz of the *Kansas State Ledger* and J. Monroe Dorsey of the *Parsons Weekly Blade*. Print jobs were an integral component in generating income for the *Ledger*. Jeltz had to relocate his office several times because of the growing clientele.<sup>123</sup> After moving the business to a larger facility, he wrote:

We enlarged our business, adding to it a complete job office, and employed another lady printer of experience. We are now prepared to complete any job office in Topeka. We do all kinds of work in this office in the line of printing.<sup>124</sup>

Similarly, earnings from print jobs appeared to contribute to the *Parsons Weekly Blade*'s longevity. The *Blade* Publishing Company expanded its printing business after J. Monroe Dorsey took over as editor in 1895. In celebration of the *Blade*'s five years of operation, the newspaper put out a special anniversary issue. In the preface, editor Dorsey wrote:

Five years ago there was nothing more than a name, but industry, thrift and the untiring efforts of its projectors--the enterprising colored people of Parsons --The BLADE now has an almost complete print plant . . . . The BLADE is on a solid and permanent basis, having stood the ups and downs of a newspaper life for five years.<sup>125</sup>

Within the Kansas press network, the *Ledger* and the *Blade*, along with the *American Citizen*, proved to be among the

most hardy, functioning through the 1890s into the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>126</sup>

In operating a black-owned business, Dorsey and other editors accepted responsibility for providing work and training for people in the community. "We want to see our girls and boys employed," Jeltz asserted in the *Ledger*.

A number of newspapers made a practice of hiring only black employees, including compositors, production foremen, officer clerks, and correspondents.<sup>127</sup> Bruce of the *Herald* believed black-owned businesses should provide training for young people in the community. When Bruce started his paper, he adopted the policy set by Advocate founder N. Clark Smith--hiring young boys from Leavenworth as typesetters.<sup>128</sup>

Young women, such as Lutie Lytle, also found employment and received training at the papers. Certain newspapers advertised specifically for women to fill positions as correspondents and agents. The *Parsons Weekly Blade* editor, concerned about the lack of job options for young women, staffed his office with female compositors and mailing clerks. The *American Citizen*, the *Kansas State Ledger*, and the *National Reflector* were among the newspapers whose mastheads listed women as assistant editors, correspondents, agents, and columnists. Mrs. Frances Jackson of the *American Citizen* began as a correspondent

for the Kansas City, Missouri, area. She proved to be a capable writer and eventually became associate editor, taking charge of the paper when the editor was out of town.<sup>129</sup>

Not all of the papers practiced the same hiring policies. Contrary to most of the editors, *Kansas State Ledger* editor F. L. Jeltz employed whites in his print shop, and consequently, elicited criticism from his journalist colleagues.<sup>130</sup> While Jeltz initially reported that he chose his employees because of their skills,<sup>131</sup> he later defended his hiring practices as an effort to improve race relations: "We draw no color line. It will not do; it tends to excite controversies between the races. We employ white help at this office as well as colored. In fact, we divide up employment."<sup>132</sup>

Although the *Ledger* and a few newspapers managed to publish for years, financial problems plagued most of the Kansas papers. Difficulties in securing paying subscribers and in maintaining a sufficient advertising base often kept account books in the red. In an effort to offset deficits, several papers used incentives to generate more subscribers, such as the subscription package of the *Kansas State Ledger* and *Topeka Capital*: three-months for 65 cents.<sup>133</sup> The *Southern Argus* sponsored a contest among its agents, awarding merchandise--"a lady's beautiful silk

umbrella, worth \$5 [and] an elegant album, worth \$2.50"--to those who sold the most subscriptions.<sup>134</sup>

To increase advertising revenues, newspapers pleaded repeatedly with readers to purchase goods and services from businesses listed in the papers.<sup>135</sup> The Leavenworth Advocate urged readers who needed

something in the line of dry-goods, boots and shoes, crockery, furniture, lumber, hardware and implements, [to] buy them of those persons whose cards you see in our advertised lists; for it is through the help of them, that makes it possible for us to publish the paper.<sup>136</sup>

Those who ran the newspapers recognized that a profitable business contributed to the livelihood of its owners and employees, as well as benefited the community by increasing the job market for young men and women. Although individuals needed to further their education, having jobs was essential for a community's well being. When the Atchison *Blade* editor announced an increase in the size of the paper, he pledged to "give employment to more of our people."<sup>137</sup>

#### Uplift for the Common Good

As leaders and spokesmen for their communities, the editors of the Kansas' black press underscored themes of education and entrepreneurship to better their lives and their communities. Fearing the futility of politics as a means to improve the status of African Americans, newspaper

editors prodded readers to focus their efforts toward attaining "the equalizing power of education"<sup>138</sup> and establishing enterprises "owned and controlled entirely by colored men."<sup>139</sup>

The press could point with pride to young women and men who gained work experience at newspapers. A number, including Lutie Lytle, Aritha Dorsey, and Grant Brown, went on to complete educational programs that prepared them for such professions as law, teaching and medicine. In 1899, the *American Citizen* acknowledged receipt of a graduation announcement from Howard University in Washington, D.C.:

Among the graduates in medicine will be Mr. Grant G. Brown, of Atchison, Kas. This young man has our congratulations for success when he shall have faced the thronging mass without the college door, and go forth to battle on life's field of action.

Young people better readied for life with knowledge and skills ultimately brought merit to the entire community.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Leavenworth *Herald*, 5 June 1897; 19 June 1897. In 1865, Methodist Episcopal Church missionaries founded Central Tennessee College in Nashville to educate black ministers and teachers. The Department of Law was established in 1879. For further biographical information about Lytle and her attendance at Central Tennessee College, see Noreen R. Connolly, "Attorney Lutie A. Lytle: Options and Obstacles of a Legal Pioneer," *The Nebraska Lawyer* (January 1999): 6-12.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 16 October 1897. According to the *Herald*, Lutie Lytle wrote a letter to *The New York Sunday Journal* in which she said she was deciding whether to start her practice in Topeka or possibly follow advice from those who counseled her to go to New York.

Lutie grew up in Topeka, where her father, a barber, had considerable influence among the capital city's black community. Apparently, she was born in the early 1870s, although sources vary as to her actual birth date. In a biographical article, Noreen Connolly dated Lytle's birth as 1871. In the same article, she contended that Lutie was born in Kansas, although the author conceded she had found no records verifying Lutie's birthplace or birth date. One primary source referred to young Lytle as "Tennessee born but Kansas educated" (*Kansas Blackman*, 8 June 1894). Other sources suggest Lutie may have been born in Tennessee shortly before the family migrated to Kansas (See Connolly, 6-12; "Notable Kansans of African Descent," Kansas State Historical Society [online]; accessed 23 October 2000; available at <http://www.ksshs.org/people/afampeop.htm>; Internet.) Father John R. Lytle, born in Mufreesboro, Tennessee, in 1851, probably arrived in Kansas with the Exodusters in the late 1870s. For a reference to J. R. Lytle's Topeka barbershop, see *Kansas Blackman*, 29 June 1894. The elder Lytle served as an officer on the city's police force for a time (*American Citizen*, 11 May 1894).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 2 October 1897.

<sup>4</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 25 August 1893

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.; *Leavenworth Herald*, 2 October 1897. Among the out-of-state papers on the *Citizen's* exchange list were the Indianapolis *Freeman*, the *New York Age*, the *Washington (D.C.) Bee*, and the *Cleveland Gazette*.

<sup>7</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 2 October 1897.

<sup>8</sup>*American Citizen*, 11 May 1894; *Kansas Blackman*, 8 June 1894; *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 19 January 1895; *Leavenworth Herald*, 16 October 1897.

<sup>9</sup>Connolly, 7.

<sup>10</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 25 September 1897.

<sup>11</sup>A friendship with Lulu Jeltz may have caught Lutie's interest in newspaper work. Young Jeltz, niece of F. L. Jeltz, worked as city solicitor for the *Kansas State Ledger* after her uncle founded the Topeka paper in 1892. Lutie occasionally joined her friend on visits to neighboring communities, such as Lawrence and Leavenworth, where Lulu collected subscription payments for the *Ledger* (*Kansas State Ledger*, 22 July 1892; 29 July 1892).

Besides her job at the *Citizen*, Lutie worked as an office clerk, writer, and local-page editor at the *Kansas Blackman*, founded by W. D. Driver after he returned to Kansas from a stint with several newspapers in Indiana. While at the *Blackman*, Lutie agreed to write for the *American Citizen* as its Topeka correspondent, gathering religious and societal news about the city's black community. The *Citizen* acknowledged her contributions to the paper, noting Lutie's admirable reputation as an "obedient, polite and bright pupil in our schools" (*American Citizen*, 11 May 1894). In 1895, the Populist Party appointed Lutie as an assistant clerk in Topeka (*Kansas State Ledger*, 11 January 1895).

<sup>12</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 19 April 1890; *Southern Argus*, 23 July 1891.

<sup>13</sup>Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 3-6.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 21-22.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>16</sup>In 1890, Kansas recorded 19.2 percent of the "colored population" attending common school, compared with 22 percent of whites. While the illiteracy rate for blacks in Kansas was 32.8 percent, the percentage decreased to 22.3 percent a decade later. See Department of Commerce, *Negro Population, 1790-1915* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918), 419; 1890 census data, "Historical United States Census Data Browser" [database online], accessed 3

November 2000; available at <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu>; Internet.

<sup>17</sup>Gaines, 4.

<sup>18</sup>Frankie Hutton, *The Early Black Press in America, 1827-1860* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 57. In the salutatory of *Freedom's Journal*, editors Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm valued education as a means for attaining full citizenship. To the patrons they wrote: "Education being an object of the highest importance to the welfare of society, we shall endeavour to present just and adequate views of it, and to urge upon our brethren the necessity and expediency of training their children, [while] young, to habits of industry, and thus forming them for becoming useful members of society" (*Freedom's Journal*, New York, NY, 16 March 1827; accessed 23 October 2000; available from <http://accessible.palinet.org>; Internet).

*The Colored American*, published in New York in the early 1840s, echoed similar sentiments: "If there is any one trait in the character of colored Americans that should elevate them in the opinion of all civilized nations, it is the love of learning" (*The Colored American*, New York, NY, 17 July 1841; accessed 23 October 2000; available from <http://accessible.palinet.org>; Internet).

<sup>19</sup>*People's Friend*, 3 August 1894.

<sup>20</sup>"A Power," *Leavenworth Herald*, 8 December 1894.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 17 February 1894.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 8 December 1894.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 17 February 1894.

<sup>24</sup>See Howard Brotz, ed., *Negro, Social and Political Thought, 1850-1920: Representative Texts* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1966), 7.

<sup>25</sup>August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1963), 85-87; Robert Francis Engs, *Educating the Disfranchised and Disinherited: Samuel Chapman Armstrong and Hampton*

*Institute, 1839-1893* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 70-73.

<sup>26</sup>For example, Hampton Institute teachers were expected to "instill values and forms of behavior that would enable students to advance in the 'civilized white world'" (Engs, 106).

<sup>27</sup>In 1903, W. E. B. Du Bois became Washington's harshest critic, sharply dividing the conservative and radical camps. See Meier, *Negro Thought*, 166-167.

<sup>28</sup>*Washington Bee*, 2 November 1895. Prior to editing the *Bee*, William Calvin Chase, trained as a printer, held an appointment in the government printing office in Washington, D.C. He also worked on *The Washington Plaindealer* and the *Argus of Washington*. According to his journalist colleagues, Chase earned the reputation for "boldness of thought and fearlessness of speech" (I. Garland Penn, *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors* [Springfield, MA: Willey & Co., 1891; Reprint, Salem, NH: Ayer Company, 1964], 288).

<sup>29</sup>Meier, *Negro Thought*, 74.

<sup>30</sup>Before founding the *Colored American*, E. E. Cooper was associated with two Indianapolis newspapers, *The Colored World*, later renamed the *Indianapolis World*, and the *Indianapolis Freeman*. See Penn, 334-339.

<sup>31</sup>Cooper to BTW, 2 November 1895, in Louis R. Harlan, ed., *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, Vol. 3, 1889-1895 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 69.

<sup>32</sup>Roland Wolseley, *The Black Press, U.S.A.*, 2nd ed. (Ames: Iowa State University, 1990), 45-46, 64-66; Clint C. Wilson II, *Black Journalists in Paradox* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishers, 1991), 41.

<sup>33</sup>W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, with introduction by John Edgar Wideman (New York: First Vintage Books, 1990), 44.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 42.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 78.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 78.

<sup>37</sup>Meier, *Negro Thought*, 171-189.

<sup>38</sup>*National Baptist World*, 7 September 1894; *Leavenworth Herald*, 1 May 1897; 22 May 1897.

<sup>39</sup>*National Baptist World*, 7 September 1894. The *Leavenworth Herald*, 12 June 1897, wrote: "Tuskegee Institute is without doubt the largest and best equipped school for the education of colored youth in this country, possibly excepting the Hampton Institute in Virginia."

<sup>40</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 12 November 1892.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 27 August 1892.

<sup>42</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 25 March 1893.

<sup>43</sup>Racial distinctions were part of the schooling issues for blacks since the formation of the Kansas Territory. See James C. Carper, "The Popular Ideology of Segregated Schooling: Attitudes Toward the Education of Blacks in Kansas, 1854-1900," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 1, no. 4 (Winter 1978): 254-265.

<sup>44</sup>*Historic Times*, 15 August 1891.

<sup>45</sup>For examples, see *National Baptist World*, 5 October 1894; *Leavenworth Herald*, 2 March 1895.

<sup>46</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 18 March 1893.

<sup>47</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 17 May 1890.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 24 September 1892.

<sup>51</sup>Although the Kansas State Agricultural College in Manhattan was featured in a *Parsons Weekly Blade* as a

school "concerning the study of industrial training," few of the black newspapers promoted attendance at the school. See *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 6 July 1895.

<sup>52</sup>W. B. Townsend, editor of the Leavenworth Advocate, received his teaching certification at the Leavenworth school, founded in 1870 and offering classes until 1876. See William G. Cutler, "Part 22: Era of Peace," *History of the State of Kansas* [book online] (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), accessed 22 October 2000; available from <http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/kancoll/books/cutler>; Internet.

<sup>53</sup>In the early 1870s, prior to the Exoduster migrations, the Kansas Legislature founded the Colored Normal School of Quindaro as a part of Freedman's University, established by the Rev. Edwin Blatchley for the education of blacks after emancipation. See Perl W. Morgan, ed. and comp., *History of Wyandotte County and Its People* [book online] (Chicago: Lewis Publications, 1911), accessed 24 October 2000, available from <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/archives/wyandott/history/1911/volumel>; Internet.

<sup>54</sup>With low enrollment and meager financial support, the school floundered until the Rev. William T. Vernon took charge as president in 1896. He managed to secure state funding for building construction. In 1899, in addition to teacher training and college preparatory curriculum for theology, the classics, and music, the school established the State Industrial Department. Students received instruction in vocational skills, such as printing, drafting, carpentry, tailoring, business, and agriculture. Through Vernon's leadership, the school gained prominence, attracting students from Kansas and throughout the United States through the 1920s, closing to students in 1944. See Larry Hancks, "Quindaro and Western University," compiled 1 March 1894, accessed 24 October 2000; available from <http://www.kckcc.cc.ks.us/ss/hancksqw.htm>; Internet.

<sup>55</sup>The school closed its doors in 1896 because of financial difficulties. See Nelson Case, ed. and comp., *Labette County Kansas History and Its Representative Citizens* [book online] (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Co., 1901), 195-201, accessed 30 September 2000; available from <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/archives/labette/1901/195-201.shtml>; Internet.

<sup>56</sup>Parsons Weekly Blade, 15 October 1892.

<sup>57</sup>Leavenworth Advocate, 1 June 1889. Several years later, Minnie traveled with her family to Madagascar, where her father served as U.S. consul. The island, off the coast of southeast Africa, became a colony of France in 1896.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 4 July 1891. The Congressional Enactment authorized the university when Kansas became a state in 1861. The city of Lawrence agreed to donate the property, and the Kansas Legislature named Lawrence as the location, with classes beginning in September 1866 (See Cutler, Part 22).

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 27 September 1890. The university's policy of admitting black students was a primary reason for B. K. Bruce's decision to move from Missouri to Kansas in early 1880s. At that time, state universities in Missouri and Oklahoma were closed to African Americans. He graduated in 1885. Bruce, though, was not the first black student to attend the university. In 1876, a young black woman had enrolled in the school, but she didn't earn a degree. Apparently, most of the first black students who attended the university did not graduate. Chuck Marsh cited a 1909 article of *The Graduate Magazine*, the alumni magazine: "By far the majority of the colored students who have come to the University did not remain through the sophomore years" (See "Auditor of State," *Topeka Daily Capitol*, 26 October 1892; Chuck Marsh, "First Black Graduate was Acclaimed Tutor," *University of Kansas Alumni Magazine* 83, no. 5 [February 1985]: 11).

Even by 1891, only four black students had completed degrees, two at the collegiate level and two from the law department. As two of the four graduates, Advocate co-editors W. B. Townsend and B. K. Bruce Jr. believed that black high school graduates from Leavenworth and surrounding communities were overlooking a golden opportunity to further their education. The editors urged young people to consider attending the university because they could not "afford to stop at the halfway stations, but must go to the top, and that by so doing they will be better equipped for the many varied duties of life" (Leavenworth Advocate, 4 July 1891).

Despite urging by Bruce, Townsend, and other journalists, the number of black students at Lawrence did not increase dramatically. In fact, the Leavenworth *Herald* reported "just one colored graduate out of 178 graduates from the State University" in 1897. "This is a remarkably poor showing, one which should make the colored people in this state blush for shame," deplored the *Herald*. The paper exhorted those "in all parts of the state to secure a better attendance of colored pupils at the University" (*Leavenworth Herald*, 3 July 1897).

<sup>61</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 27 August 1892.

<sup>62</sup>Correspondent I. McCorker, alias Will Harris, introduced the students, dubbed "The University Boys," to *Times-Observer* readers. Those who graduated from Kansas high schools included Walter E. Gray of Leavenworth, Fred C. West of Arkansas City, Fred Stone of Lawrence, and Grant G. Brown of Atchison (*Times-Observer*, 19 December 1891).

<sup>63</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 15 August 1891; *Historic Times*, 10 October 1891; *American Citizen*, 16 October 1891.

<sup>64</sup>"Lawrence News," *Atchison Blade*, 12 November 1892; "At the University," *Atchison Blade*, 1 October 1892; 26 November 1892; "QUERIES," *Atchison Blade*, 15 April 1893. Enrolled in pre-med classes, Brown assumed leadership among his peers in Lawrence. After completing his coursework in 1893, Brown taught school in Wathena before being accepted into Howard University, where he earned a medical degree. He returned to Kansas, working as a health officer in Atchison before moving to Wichita, where he served as the doctor for the Phyllis Wheatley Orphans Home. See Frank Mather, *Who's Who of the Colored Race: A General Biographical Dictionary of Men and Women of African Descent* (Chicago: F. L. Mather, 1915; Reprint, Detroit: Gale Research Company, Book Tower, 1976), 42.

<sup>65</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 1 April 1893.

<sup>66</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 26 August 1892; *Topeka Journal*, 9 March 1937. Born in 1865, Jeltz was raised in Jackson, Mississippi. He received his teacher training in the Normal Department of Tougaloo, graduating in 1877. See *Kansas State Ledger*, 20 October 1893; "Tougaloo College, History

of The College," accessed 24 September 2000; available at [www.tougaloo.edu/history.html](http://www.tougaloo.edu/history.html); Internet.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 9 February 1894. Jeltz frequently mentioned daughters Lillie, Maud, Annie, and Flora by name in the paper. As Jeltz's eldest two daughters, Lillie and Maud, grew older, he enlisted their help in producing the newspaper and running the printing business.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 11 August 1893.

<sup>69</sup>1890 census data, "Historical United States Census Data Browzer." In 1894, the *Kansas State Ledger* published the monthly salaries of black teachers at six Topeka schools. Among seventeen teachers, the amounts ranged from \$40 to \$70 for principals, averaging about \$58 (*Kansas State Ledger*, 2 February 1894).

With two black teachers employed in Parsons public schools, the *Parsons Weekly Blade* demanded the school board appoint another: "There are plenty of colored ladies and gentlemen right here in town who are full qualified to instruct the children of their own race. . . . We are entitled to at least three colored teachers in the city schools of Parsons, and we might have four. If Parsons people can go off to other places and teach they can certainly teach at home" (*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 8 May 1897). In order to find a teaching position, editor Dorsey's sister Aritha was forced to apply out of state.

<sup>70</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 18 August 1893.

<sup>71</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 16 March 1895.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>The letter, submitted by Dennis Hope, Ellen Slaughter, and C. L. De Randamie, was reprinted in the *Kansas State Ledger*, 8 September 1893.

<sup>75</sup>W. B. Townsend and W. J. Johnson clashed in a series of exchanges over the mixed-schools issue in the *Leavenworth Advocate*. The *Advocate*, joined by the *Southern Argus* of Baxter Springs, called for the Johnson's

resignation after the Topeka School Board accused him of improprieties. Johnson was reinstated, much to the dismay of the Advocate and Argus editors. See *Leavenworth Advocate*, 11 April 1891; 21 April 1891; 2 May 1891; 11 July 1891; *Southern Argus*, 9 July 1891; 23 July 1891.

<sup>76</sup> *Leavenworth Advocate*, 21 February 1891.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 December 1889.

<sup>78</sup> Townsend, as a journalist and political leader, worked to overturn the 1879 law passed by the Kansas legislature that allowed school boards in first-class cities to discriminate against colored students. "Each year since the passage of that pernicious law, your Editor, assisted by a few faithful friends of the race, have been pleading with the legislatures to repeal that law," he lamented to his readers (*Leavenworth Advocate*, 4 May 1889). Townsend had the backing of Prof. S. G. Watkins of Topeka, a long-time teacher who supported mixed schools. See *Leavenworth Advocate*, 28 February 1891.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 November 1889. A Columbus, Ohio, correspondent to the Indianapolis *Freeman* wrote: "Separate schools were a badge of inferiority usually advocated by a few selfish people who had not love for the race" (*Indianapolis Freeman*, 29 March 1890).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 October 1889.

<sup>81</sup> *Leavenworth Advocate*, 7 December 1889; 21 December 1889. Tonganoxie, a third-class city, was located in Leavenworth County. According to the *Advocate*, the judge based his ruling on *Board of Education v. Tinnon*, stating that "under the provision for freedom of schools each child may determine for itself what school of its grade of scholarship in the city it will attend, irrespective of any question of territory, sex, or color." See *Board of Education v. Tinnon*, 26 Kan. 1 (1881), accessed 27 October 2000; available from <http://brownvboard.org/research/handbook/sources/tinnon/tinnon.htm>; Internet.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 December 1889.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 January 1890.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 18 January 1890. After Townsend made a visit to Tonganoxie to inspect the separate school facilities, he found a small store, "a dingy and dilapidated looking place, . . . scarcely fit for a decent stable," with classes led by an incompetent teacher who "has not the ability to govern a school." Townsend also reported that whites and blacks of the village were divided over the school issue (*Leavenworth Advocate*, 15 February 1890).

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 29 June 1889.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 29 June 1889.

<sup>87</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 6 July 1895.

<sup>88</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 10 May 1890.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 24 May 1890.

<sup>91</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 4 January 1896.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 26 January 1895.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 30 January 1897.

<sup>98</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 31 August 1895.

<sup>99</sup>*Leavenworth Herald*, 4 January 1896.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 1 February 1896.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 8 February 1896.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 25 January 1896.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 11 January 1896.

<sup>104</sup>*Times-Observer*, 21 May 1892.

<sup>105</sup>August Meier, "Negro Class Structure and Ideology in the Age of Booker T. Washington," *Phylon* 23 (Fall 1962): 258-266.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 258-260.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 258.

<sup>108</sup>*Times-Observer*, 21 May 1892.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>*National Reflector*, 6 March 1897; 3 April 1897; 5 June 1897; 3 July 1897.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 7 September 1894.

<sup>112</sup>Woods, *Black Odyssey*, 42; *Leavenworth Advocate*, 5 April 1890.

<sup>113</sup>Cox, 91; Nupur Chaudhuri, "'We All Seem Like Brothers and Sisters': The African-American Community in Manhattan, Kansas, 1865-1940," *Kansas History* 14, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 276-288; Aleen J. Ratzlaff, "Issue Framing in the 1890s: Race, Politics, and Religion in Early Newspapers of Wichita, Kansas" (Unpublished master's thesis, The Wichita State University, 1994), 15; "The Blade," Parsons, Kansas, 31 July 1897, KSHS, K 326, Pam. no. 11.

<sup>114</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 3 May 1890.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 24 May 1890.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 4 May 1889.

<sup>117</sup>*National Reflector*, 15 August 1896. Newspapers may have charged for these ads, although the only published rates were listed by column, half column, and inch.

<sup>118</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 20 January 1893.

<sup>119</sup>Leavenworth Advocate, 5 April 1890.

<sup>120</sup>Nathaniel Turner Langston worked with several newspapers in Kansas' black press network. He was a compositor for the Leavenworth Advocate and traveled as an agent for the *Kansas State Ledger*. He served as the city editor and briefly as the editor-in-chief for the *Historic Times*. In 1892, he and two partners started the *Atchison Blade*, but Nat eventually left to work at his father's grocery business after the elder Langston died in October 1892. See Leavenworth Advocate, 8 November 1890; *American Citizen*, 17 July 1891; 22 July 1892; *Kansas State Ledger*, 14 April 1893; 23 January 1893; Leavenworth Herald, 13 July 1895.

<sup>121</sup>Frequently income from print shops helped compensate costs for publishing black newspapers. See Emma Lou Thornbrough, "American Negro Newspapers, 1880-1914," *Business History Review* 40, no. 4 (Winter 1966), 474.

<sup>122</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 5 August 1892.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 5 January 1894; 6 April 1894.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 5 January 1894.

<sup>125</sup>"The Blade," Fifth Anniversary, 31 July 1897.

<sup>126</sup>The *American Citizen* of Kansas City, the longest running paper, published from 1888 to 1907. Both the *Parsons Weekly Blade* and *Kansas State Ledger* of Topeka were founded in 1892. The *Blade* existed until 1904, while the *Ledger* expired two years later.

<sup>127</sup>Leavenworth Advocate, 7 December 1889; *American Citizen*, 20 February 1891; 4 September 1891.

<sup>128</sup>Leavenworth Advocate, 11 May 1889. Bruce hired Will Harris as his business manager at the *Herald*. Harris was one of the boys who had trained as a typesetter at the *Advocate* (Leavenworth Herald, 28 August 1897).

<sup>129</sup>The evidence suggests that in several instances editors' wives, including Mrs. C. H. J. Taylor, Mrs. F. L.

Jeltz, and Mrs. J. Monroe Dorsey, assumed editorial responsibilities in getting the newspapers out in their husbands' absences.

<sup>130</sup>*Kansas State Ledger*, 20 January 1893.

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup>*Ibid.*, 27 April 1894.

<sup>133</sup>*Ibid.*, 29 July 1892.

<sup>134</sup>*Southern Argus*, 25 June 1894.

<sup>135</sup>For an example, see *American Citizen*, 10 March 1893.

<sup>136</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 20 July 1889.

<sup>137</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 5 November 1892.

<sup>138</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 2 June 1894.

<sup>139</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 7 December 1889.

PART THREE: APPROACHING A TURNING POINT

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

After the Exoduster migration of Southern blacks to frontier Kansas in the late 1870s, a network of black newspapers developed that helped forge ties among communities of African Americans in the Sunflower State during the late-nineteenth century. More than fifty newspapers were produced over a 20-year period, primarily in a triangular area that extended from Atchison County in the northeast corner, near the Missouri and Nebraska borders, to Sedgwick County in the southwest, and to Labette and Cherokee counties in the southeast.

This chapter considers the importance of interconnections among African Americans in Kansas during the late-nineteenth century. Several core elements emerged as primary means through which the state's black press linked readers and strengthened ties among communities in Kansas, as well as nationally. A discussion of the implications in this study points to areas for further research about black press development.

Newspaper Network

The earliest newspapers were published primarily in the northeastern counties of Douglass, Shawnee, and Leavenworth. Soon black-run newspapers appeared in towns and cities in other areas. By the early 1890s, newspapers were circulated to communities throughout the state, as well as to readers living in Iowa, Nebraska, the Indian Territory, Texas, Illinois, Tennessee, and Mississippi.<sup>1</sup>

Circumstances in Kansas during the late-nineteenth century necessitated strong connections among communities of African Americans. Not only did they experience geographic isolation, but African Americans also lacked a public voice to address concerns and a platform to generate political influence. Some black communities were located in remote areas or in small enclaves in urban areas. In southwestern Kansas, African Americans accounted for only 3 percent of Sedgwick County's population in 1890, with Wichita recording the largest concentration. The percentage diminished to less than 1 percent when surrounding counties were included in the population count. In Topeka, more than 100 miles northeast, blacks made up 20 percent of the citizenry. A reliance on news delivered primarily by word-of-mouth provided limited information between the cities.

While railroad lines were an obvious link between towns and cities on the rolling plains of Kansas, newspapers expanded the scope of news coverage and enabled residents in cities such as Wichita and Topeka to maintain awareness of a larger community. A Wichita resident who left on the early morning train to Topeka could return by afternoon with dispatches from the capital city.<sup>2</sup> However, citizens in Wichita and Topeka who subscribed to the *Kansas State Ledger* found news reports in the paper from both cities.

Coverage about black communities rarely found its way into the mainstream press in Kansas. Newspapers produced by whites typically ignored social events, concerns, and issues relevant to black readers. The *People's Friend of Wichita*, expressing sentiments similar to those found in other black newspapers, pointed to the denigration of blacks by the white press. "There is not a daily in the city that does not speak of the colored people dispairingly [sic], and a colored paper is the only one that will publish a pointed reply," editor William Jeltz wrote.<sup>3</sup>

Blacks in Wichita and other communities, rebuffed by the mainstream press, needed a public voice that addressed their interests. Although escaping the severe oppression leveled against blacks in the South, African Americans in

Kansas encountered restrictions in accessing public facilities and services, limited opportunities for employment, and barriers in education. Through the press, black leaders called for meetings to discuss common dilemmas braved by blacks throughout the state.<sup>4</sup> According to the Parsons *Weekly Blade*, the press furnished a tangible means for demonstrating to whites the capabilities of blacks.<sup>5</sup> The press not only gave African Americans a much-needed means of expression, but also offered hope for understanding among the races by reading each other's publications, reasoned the editor of the *Southern Argus* in Baxter Springs.<sup>6</sup>

The public voice provided through black newspapers kept readers in Kansas informed about the prevalent oppressive treatment of African Americans during this era, especially in the Southern states. First- and second-generation Kansans, with strong ties to the South, could follow the progressive passage of Jim Crow laws, learn about the disfranchisement of black voters, and familiarize themselves with the pervasive mob violence committed against blacks. Published lists of lynchings, frequently reprinted from papers such as the *Richmond Planet*, were available to Kansas readers.<sup>7</sup>

During the late-nineteenth century, blacks in Kansas saw the opportunity for achieving political leverage. Even though their numbers were not large statewide, black populations concentrated in several counties had the potential to affect the outcome of elections, particularly during the rise of the Populist Party in the early 1890s. The contingent of black voters needed a way to maximize their influence in local and state government. Whether campaigning for candidates, lobbying for political appointments, or urging voters to the polls, the press offered leaders a way to solicit support of African Americans throughout the state.<sup>8</sup> When journalists, through the pages of the *Leavenworth Advocate*, orchestrated a campaign to nominate John L. Waller as state auditor, the black press demonstrated its ability to exercise political sway.<sup>9</sup>

Three components, in particular, facilitated connections among communities through the newspaper network--the editors, the correspondents and agents, and the newspaper exchanges. Editors established newspapers with the purpose of reaching readers beyond a single town or city. Correspondents and agents complemented the editors' vision of outreach by relaying news from near and distant localities, as well as soliciting subscribers.

Newspaper exchanges, as another tangible means for receiving news from other areas, helped enhance two-way communication between communities across the country. Together, these components expanded both content and circulation of the newspapers.

As the personification of their newspapers, editors exerted influence as community leaders. The newspapers gave them a forum for publishing their points of view on issues that ranged from community reform to segregated schools.<sup>10</sup> Some editors were more prolific in their writings than others. C. H. J. Taylor, who wrote lengthy articles printed on the first page of the *American Citizen*, regularly expounded the value of blacks adopting a politically independent stance.<sup>11</sup> Taylor also published accounts of his frequent travels to various towns and relayed greetings from those he met to the *Citizen* readers.<sup>12</sup>

Several journalists poured their energies into improving the living conditions experienced by blacks in Kansas. Their efforts encompassed social, educational, and legal concerns. Advocate editor W. B. Townsend persistently worked to abolish gambling houses in Leavenworth and to promote the integration of public schools throughout Kansas. Through the *Leavenworth Herald*, educator B. K. Bruce Jr. urged continuing education for teachers and

affordable textbooks for children. At community-wide meetings throughout Kansas, F. L. Jeltz of the *Kansas State Ledger* denounced Southern lynch mobs. S. W. Jones and W. A. Bettis of the *National Reflector* in Wichita formed a statewide antilynching league to organize resistance toward violence perpetrated against African Americans.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, newspapers enabled a number of journalists to expand their sphere of influence as they assumed political leadership for the black electorate. Some ran for state office, including Waller and Bruce, while others sought local positions, such as Jeltz and Jones. However, repeated attempts to organize black voters and lobby for political appointments yielded minimal long-term results.<sup>14</sup>

In an effort to further enhance the impact of the press, several editors, led by John L. Waller of the *American Citizen*, formed a regional association in 1896 for black editors, the Western Negro Press Association. Waller and his colleagues hoped the organization would facilitate collegial relationships, mitigate conflicts that emerged on pages of the papers, and coordinate efforts among the newspapers. Most editors from Kansas participated, meeting annually with journalists from other western states for at least ten years.<sup>15</sup>

The annual conventions provided opportunities to cultivate professional relationships, which were vital to an effective press network. According to correspondent Dennis Thompson of Kansas City, Missouri, "a newspaper man cannot by any means become acquainted with his brother laborers, through the exchange list alone, but he must actually meet him face to face, and exchange ideas with him as well."<sup>16</sup>

While editors assumed the spotlight and played an important role in maintaining the newspapers, a brigade of correspondents and agents were essential in linking communities. These correspondents reported news from their local areas, giving residents an added incentive for subscribing to the newspaper. Weekly reports kept readers aware of events at home and in neighboring communities. "Wellington" of Lawrence and "Fearless" of Topeka were familiar names to newspaper readers throughout Kansas. Lesser-known correspondents enabled the newspapers' outreach to cross state borders. For example, the Parsons *Weekly Blade* listed more than eight correspondents from Texas communities, while the *National Reflector* featured regular reports from an agent in California.

Many correspondents also acted as agents for the newspapers, taking responsibility for collecting

subscription payments. Usually known in their communities, these workers personalized the out-of-town newspapers for readers. When the editor of the *Parsons Weekly Blade* decided to open a branch office in Wichita, he called on former Parsons resident Henrietta Turner to run the office, gather news, and solicit subscribers.<sup>17</sup>

Newspapers regularly advertised for "Good, Reliable ladies and gentlemen for agents and correspondents everywhere."<sup>18</sup> Editors relied on them to provide much of the "original" content found in the newspapers. On occasion, an editor had to inform readers that the office received more news from its correspondents than the paper could publish, and the rest of the copy would have to be held over until the following week's issue.<sup>19</sup>

While correspondents and agents played a vital role in the network, newspaper exchanges were another means for maintaining ties among black communities. This common practice served as a news source, as well as a channel of nationwide communication. Editors excerpted from other newspapers, a practice encouraged--provided editors credited the source. The excerpts ranged from public notices and news accounts to editorial commentary.

Most of the newspapers regularly clipped brief notices of African Americans' achievements across the country. The

*National Reflector*, headlining its list as "Some Intersting [sic] Race Items," noted the following:

Miss Ida Estelle Hill, Millerton, New York, a worthy representative of the liberally educated young colored women of this country, is a member of the freshman class of Boston University and the first colored girl to enter the college of liberal arts as a regular candidate for the degree of A. B.<sup>20</sup>

These news portions carried messages meant to motivate blacks to work toward advancement, as well as to demonstrate accomplishments blacks could contribute to mainstream society. Following the announcement of John Mitchell's re-election as alderman in Richmond, Virginia, the *Parsons Weekly Blade* editorialized: "[Planet] Editor Mitchell is a stalwart republican and is held in highest esteem. He is continually showing the world the possibilities of the Negro."<sup>21</sup>

In addition, the newspaper exchanges contributed to vigorous discussion among the editors and correspondents over a range of issues. The debate over segregated or integrated schools was carried in the pages of several newspapers, including the *Leavenworth Advocate*, the *American Citizen*, and the *Kansas State Ledger*. When the *Leavenworth Herald* published attacks against Ida B. Wells, the *Parsons Weekly Blade* and the *National Reflector* defended her outspoken position on lynching. In 1893,

newspapers in Kansas joined the national dialogue over policies affecting the participation of African Americans in the Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago.<sup>22</sup>

With turmoil continuing to brew in the South, the news exchanges kept people in Kansas apprised of conditions confronting African Americans. News culled from exchanges, such as the *Cleveland Gazette* and the *Indianapolis Freeman*, helped track the passage of Jim Crow laws by Southern state legislatures that began in the 1880s. Newspapers reprinted first-person accounts of the treatment black passengers received while traveling by rail in the South. Because of the exchanges, Kansas papers did not ignore the horror of lynching.<sup>23</sup>

Despite similar coverage, members of the Kansas black press exhibited unique characteristics. As the press network of Kansas developed in the different geographic sections, several aspects characterized the newspapers. The number of papers, as well as their longevity, reflected the density of the black population. The northeast area accounted for nearly two-thirds of the extant newspapers published prior to 1900, followed by the southeast, which registered about one-fourth of the papers, and the southwest, with slightly more than a tenth of the papers. Similarly, the 1890 census recorded about 65 percent of the

state's black population in northeastern counties, 23 percent in southeastern counties, and 7 percent in southwestern counties.<sup>24</sup> In the southwest, no newspaper survived beyond two years, while several newspapers in the other two areas survived more than a decade, publishing several years in the twentieth century.

Several factors contributed to the longevity of the newspapers. Manned by men with strong journalistic skills and a canny aptitude for running a business, the three longest-running papers managed to weather financially lean times because of print-job subsidies, skilled personnel, and a broader advertising base that included white and black merchants. The newspapers seemed to peak in the early to mid-1890s, despite an economic depression. However, as the print shops became less profitable and the political influence of African Americans diminished, sparse news from outlying communities, repetitious coverage, and an increased amount of readyprint characterized the newspapers after 1900.

Even though the number and lifespan of newspapers varied according to region, most of the newspapers shared similarities in content and format. Typically the papers ran as four-page weeklies that included readyprint with news reports similarly found in white newspapers, as well

as two or three pages of copy geared toward a black readership. Editors devoted at least one page to news reports and editorial commentary provided by local correspondents and/or excerpted from newspaper exchanges, along with a page designated for local news. The amount and quality of original copy vacillated for some papers, apparently affected by staff size, timely receipt of correspondents' reports, and contributions from other writers. Will Harris, for example, was associated with at least six newspapers in the Kansas network. Whenever he was part of a newspaper staff, his input was evident, whether reporting on social happenings or writing as humorist "I. McCorker."<sup>25</sup>

Much of the content was politically oriented, although newspapers such as the *Atchison Blade* made a concerted effort to regularly include literary articles written by contributing writers. The political content reflected the affiliation of the editors, the majority being Republican. Among the most prominent Republican leaders were Townsend and Bruce from Leavenworth and Waller of Lawrence.<sup>26</sup> However, a number of editors promoted alternate stances, including political independents Topeka's Jeltz and J. Monroe Dorsey of Parsons and Democrat Taylor of Kansas City.<sup>27</sup>

While many of the editors sought to carve out a sphere of political influence, in general, they expressed a growing frustration about the inability to achieve change through the political system as the end of the nineteenth century neared. Some newspaper editors had personal political ambitions, yet the majority appeared to have the interests of the larger community at heart. Time and again, editors expounded that the publications would be "thoroughly identified with the interests of the race."<sup>28</sup>

Guided by this overall purpose, the newspaper network acted as a pipeline for conveying news to readers across the state. For example, the *Atchison Blade* headlined "A Pioneer Gone" when Lawrence businessman and former abolitionist Charles H. Langston died after a prolonged illness.<sup>29</sup> The following week, the paper ran an obituary, chronicling Langston's role in the abolition movement and his subsequent marriage to Mary Leary, widow of Lewis Sheridan Leary, who was killed at Harper's Ferry.<sup>30</sup> The press network granted African Americans a public forum for discussing ideas and concerns. In one instance, the Rev. W. L. Grant of Lawrence was accused of mishandling funds of the Central Baptist Conference of Kansas. After the executive board of the Women's Home and Foreign Mission, affiliated with the denomination, reviewed the charges, the

*Parsons Weekly Blade* carried news that Grant was exonerated of any wrongdoing.<sup>31</sup>

The newspapers also supplied a platform for protesting discrimination, segregated facilities, inequities in employment, and lynching, while providing an avenue for mobilizing efforts against outrages in the South.<sup>32</sup> Access to the forum was not limited to editors and correspondents; readers contributed their opinions as well. The *Atchison Blade* published a letter written by a group from Lawrence to Governor James Stephen Hogg of Texas, along with his reply. The Lawrence citizens commended the governor after he sought to enact antilynching legislation after a white mob murdered Henry Smith of Paris.<sup>33</sup>

While the network allowed blacks to speak out against injustices, it also focused on racial uplift. The press sought to benefit the black community at large through its endorsement of education and black entrepreneurship. Editors not only urged young people to apply themselves in school, but the journalists took an active role in trying to better the educational system. In addition, they supported black-owned businesses and opportunities for job-training, so young people would be employable. The press network, according to one correspondent, should be viewed

as an educator "in the widest sense of the term" because of its efforts to work toward the good of the community.<sup>34</sup>

This mindset, so apparent in the newspapers, multiplied positive effects experienced by the Kansas communities to the race as a whole. African Americans living in the West, the North, or the South were by no means a homogeneous group. However, all shared a common lot during the late-nineteenth century. Whether from the lower working class, the rising black middle class, or the black elite, all were considered inferior to whites. The bonds established through the press helped to strengthen the resolve to improve conditions beyond the immediate readership. As stated by the editor of the *Southern Argus*, the black press was "devoted to the interests of the colored people of the state and the general public outside of the state as far as its circulation and influence reach."<sup>35</sup>

#### Implications

The movement of blacks westward, while expanding the boundaries of the race, also increased the reach and impact of the black press. In the late-1870s, Kansas became the first western state to attract a mass migration of Southern blacks. As African Americans relocated on the Kansas frontier, a robust network of newspapers evolved. Editors

strategically recruited correspondents and agents to increase their circulation in towns and cities.

Correspondents reporting news and agents collecting subscription payments were the lifeblood of the papers.

With writers in Kansas City, Topeka, Leavenworth, Lawrence, and Arkansas City, the *Atchison Blade* claimed to have the "best corps of correspondents in the state."<sup>36</sup>

Initially, the editors centered their focus on communities within the state. Newspapers with fewer subscribers had limited impact and revenues, so editors looked beyond Kansas borders. In addition to nearby Weir City and Chetopa, the *Parsons Weekly Blade* received regular reports from Joplin, Missouri, and cities in Texas,<sup>37</sup> while the *American Citizen* had a regular agent in Keokuk, Iowa.<sup>38</sup>

Although their primary readership lived in the Sunflower State, the Kansas press network, in all probability, contributed to the concept of a national black press, a topic that warrants further study. The Western Press Association, organized by *American Citizen* editor J. L. Waller, was a precursor to formal press organizations, including the Associated Negro Press founded by Claude Barnett in 1919. Like Kansas editors who wanted to circulate their papers beyond the state, *Chicago Defender* editor Robert Abbott and Robert L. Vann of the Pittsburgh

*Courier* viewed their readership as national in the twentieth century.<sup>39</sup> Their newspapers relied even more heavily on columnists, as well as correspondents, to report on national events, including World War II.

Besides modeling the twentieth-century press, the Kansas newspapers multiplied opportunities for involvement in the public sphere and served as a forum for expression, as well as an outlet for employment and job training, particularly for women.<sup>40</sup> Beyond the women who served as compositors, office clerks, weekly correspondents, and agents, several appeared to take on editorial responsibilities when their editor-husbands were out of town, including Mrs. B. K. Bruce, Mrs. F. L. Jeltz, Mrs. C. H. J. Taylor, and Mrs. J. Monroe Dorsey. Further study is needed to clarify the contributions of these women and others to the vigor and resilience of the press network in Kansas.

In addition to the contributions made by women to the press network, circumstances suggest that the "connecting" role was not unique to black newspapers in Kansas. A similar pattern may have developed among black newspapers in other western states. Participants in the Western Negro Press Association represented states west of Kansas, including Washington, California, Utah, and Colorado.<sup>41</sup>

Several Kansas editors moved further west, including Joseph B. Bass to Helena, Montana,<sup>42</sup> and W. B. Townsend to Denver, Colorado. One newspaper, the *Colorado Statesman*, pledged to serve as the "organ of the colored people in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Montana, Utah, and New Mexico."<sup>43</sup> Additional studies of Western states are needed to more fully understand the role of the black press in the development of the black race as a whole.

The press network of Kansas has left its mark on the rich history of the black press. The story of Kansas's newspapers underscores the significance of the press as a primary social institution for African Americans during this time period. Newspapers aided communication among communities and, along with churches, schools, and fraternal organizations, provided a means for exerting influence and solidarity beyond a narrow locality, the sentiment expressed in the *Historic Times* of Lawrence.

The immediate influence of the press, . . . in a large measure, . . . voices the sentiments of its constituency, moulds public opinion and becomes the criterion by which the wisdom and intelligence of our populace can be ascertained; hence the necessity of the organization.<sup>44</sup>

Notes

<sup>1</sup>For examples of out-of-state reader responses, see *Leavenworth Advocate*, 8 November 1890 and the *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 30 November 1895.

<sup>2</sup>A train on the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe line traveled regularly between Wichita and other cities in northeast Kansas (*People's Friend*, 21 September 1894).

<sup>3</sup>*People's Friend*, 14 June 1894.

<sup>4</sup>For example, the *Parsons Weekly Blade* (3 October 1896) issued a call for statewide convention in Topeka to discuss the conditions blacks faced in Kansas.

<sup>5</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 11 May 1893.

<sup>6</sup>*Southern Argus*, 18 June 1891.

<sup>7</sup>For examples, see *Leavenworth Advocate*, 28 September 1889; *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 29 October 1892; 4 April 1894; 3 August 1895.

<sup>8</sup>For examples, see *Atchison Blade*, 12 August 1892; *Leavenworth Advocate*, 29 Jun 1889; *National Baptist World*, 2 November 1894.

<sup>9</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 16 August 1890.

<sup>10</sup>For examples, see *Leavenworth Advocate*, 22 June 1889; *American Citizen*, 1 February 1895; *Kansas State Ledger*, 30 June 1893.

<sup>11</sup>*American Citizen*, 28 August 1891.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 22 June 1889; *Atchison Blade*, 4 February 1893; *Leavenworth Herald*, 30 January 1897; *Kansas State Ledger*, 9 March 1894; *National Reflector*, 26 June 1897.

<sup>14</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 15 February 1890; *Atchison Blade*, 23 July 1892; *Kansas State Ledger*, 10 March 1893;

Craig Miner, *Wichita: The Magic City* (Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum Association, 1988), 96.

<sup>15</sup>*American Citizen*, 10 July 1896; 17 July 1896.

<sup>16</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 27 April 1895.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 2 September 1893.

<sup>18</sup>*American Citizen*, 4 September 1891.

<sup>19</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 29 June 1895.

<sup>20</sup>*National Reflector*, 23 October 1897.

<sup>21</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 9 June 1894.

<sup>22</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 4 May 1889; *American Citizen*, 1 February 1895; *Kansas State Ledger*, 28 July to 25 August 1893; *National Baptist World*, 31 August 1894; *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 23 June 1894; *Leavenworth Herald*, 15 June 1894; *Topeka Call*, 26 March 1893; *Atchison Blade*, 25 March 1893; *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 25 March 1893.

<sup>23</sup>*Cleveland Gazette*, 11 July 1891; *Indianapolis Freeman*, 24 May 1890; *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 10 March 1894.

<sup>24</sup>1890 census date, "Historical United States Census Data Browser" [database online], accessed 22 October 2000, available from <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/census/>; Internet.

<sup>25</sup>As a boy, Will Harris apprenticed as a typesetter at the *Leavenworth Advocate*. He went on to complete stints at the *Times-Observer* of Topeka, the *American Citizen* of Kansas City, the *Atchison Blade*, and the *Leavenworth Herald*.

<sup>26</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 17 August 1889; *Atchison Blade*, 23 July 1892; *American Citizen*, Topeka, 23 February 1888.

<sup>27</sup>*American Citizen*, Kansas City, 20 February 1891; *Kansas State Ledger*, 24 March 1893; *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 12 May 1894. Jeltz and Dorsey shifted their allegiance from the Republican Party for a season to endorse political independence.

<sup>28</sup>*Leavenworth Advocate*, 18 August 1888.

<sup>29</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 26 November 1892.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 3 December 1892.

<sup>31</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 21 September 1895.

<sup>32</sup>For examples, see *Topeka Call*, 11 September 1892; *Kansas State Ledger*, 7 October 1892; *Leavenworth Advocate*, 1 February 1890.

<sup>33</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 18 March 1893.

<sup>34</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 17 April 1897.

<sup>35</sup>*Southern Argus*, 9 July 1891.

<sup>36</sup>*Atchison Blade*, 18 March 1893.

<sup>37</sup>*Parsons Weekly Blade*, 24 February 1894; 5 May 1894.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 25 September 1891.

<sup>39</sup>Armistead S. Pride and Clint Wilson Jr., *A History of the Black Press* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1997), 136-140.

<sup>40</sup>At the end of the nineteenth century, women were playing a significant role in the mainstream press as readers and consumers, as well as journalists. See Gerald J. Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press 1992), 64-65, 126-127, 198.

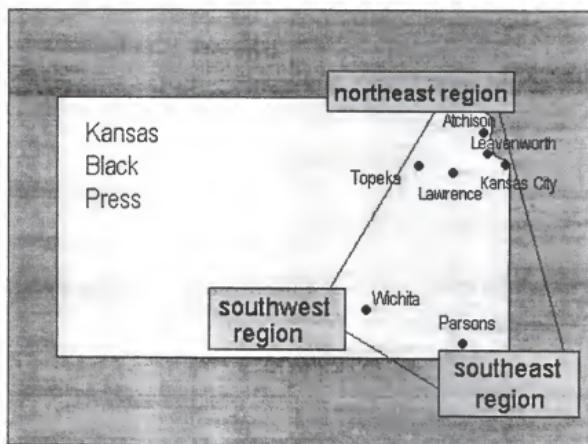
<sup>41</sup>*Indianapolis Freeman*, 11 September 1897.

<sup>42</sup>William L. Lang, "Helena, Montana's Black Community, 1900-1912," in *African Americans on the Western Frontier*, eds. Monroe Lee Billington and Roger D. Hardaway (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1998), 199.

<sup>43</sup>Gayle K. Berardi and Thomas W. Segady, "The Development of African American Newspapers in the American West, 1880-1914," in *African Americans on the Western Frontier*, eds. Monroe Lee Billington and Roger D. Hardaway (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1998), 222.

<sup>44</sup>*Historic Times*, 1 August 1891.

APPENDIX A  
TRI-REGIONAL MAP



Most black newspapers in Kansas were published in a tri-regional area during the late-nineteenth century.

APPENDIX B  
NEWSPAPERS BY REGIONS, 1878-1900

Northeastern Region

- Atchison - *Blade* (1892-1898)
- Kansas City - *American Citizen* [relocated from Topeka] (1889-1907), *Daily American Citizen* (1897-1900), *Topics* (1895), *Western Christian Recorder* (1898-1899)
- Lawrence - *Western Recorder* (1883-1884), *Historic Times* (1891)
- Leavenworth - *Advocate* (1888-1891), *Herald* [formerly the *Atchison Blade*] (1894-1898)
- Topeka - *The Colored Citizen* [relocated from Fort Scott] (1878-1900), *Herald of Kansas* (1880), *Kansas Herald* (1880), *Topeka Tribune* (1880), *Kansas State Tribune* (1881), *The Colored Patriot* (1882), *Western* (1885), *Topeka Tribune & Western* (1885), *The Benevolent Banner* (1887), *American Citizen* (1888-1889), *Times-Observer* [formerly the *Leavenworth Advocate*] (1891-1892), *Topeka Call* (1891-1893), *The Kansas State Ledger* (1892-1904), *Daily Ledger* (1893), *The Baptist Headlight* (1893-1894) *Kansas Blackman* (1894), *The People's Friend* (1896)

Southeastern Region

- Baxter Springs - *Southern Argus* (1891)
- Cherokee - *Kansas, Homestead* (1899-1900)
- Coffeyville - *Afro-American* (1891-1893), *The American* (1898-1899)
- Fort Scott - *Colored Citizen* (1878), *Southern Argus* [moved from Baxter Springs] (1891-1892), *Fair Play* (1898-1899)
- Parsons - *Weekly Blade* (1892-1900), *Baptist Globe* [formerly *National Baptist World*] (1895), *Eye Opener* (1892)
- Peru - *Freeman's Lance* (1891)
- Pittsburg - *The Pittsburg Plain Dealer* (1899-1900)
- Sedan - *The Sedan Lance* (1892-1909)
- Weir City - *Eagle* (1887-1900)

Southwestern Region

- Wichita - *Wichita Globe* (1887), *Standard* (1889), *Kansas Sunflower* (1890), *People's Friend* (1894), *Kansas Headlight* (1894), *National Baptist World* (1894), *National Reflector* (1895-1898), *The Wichita Tribune* (1898)

Source: "Black Newspapers," Kansas State Historical Society, accessed 30 September 2000, available from <http://www.kshs.org/library/blcknspr.htm>; Internet.

APPENDIX C  
BLACK JOURNALISTS OF KANSAS

Partial Listing from Selected Newspapers  
Published in Kansas, 1878-1900

J. B. Bass (businessman, journalist)

- *Weekly Call*, Topeka

William A. Bettis (barber, bookkeeper, journalist)

- *Standard*, Wichita- Editor
- *Kansas Headlight*, Wichita- Publisher and editor
- *Tribune*, Wichita - Co-editor
- *National Reflector* - Associate editor

Grant G. "Ichabod" Brown (teacher)

- Atchison correspondent for *Historic Times*, *Times-Observer*, *American Citizen* of Kansas City
- Wathena correspondent for *Leavenworth Herald*, *National Reflector*, Wichita
- Atchison *Blade* - Co-founder, editor

Blanche Ketene Bruce (educator, principal)

- *Leavenworth Advocate* - Associate editor
- *Leavenworth Herald* - Publisher and editor

J. Hume "Fearless" Childers (journalist)

- *American Citizen*, Topeka - Editor [24 Aug. - 28 Dec. 1888]
- *Indianapolis Freeman* - Topeka correspondent
- *Times-Observer* - Editor, Leavenworth correspondent, Topeka correspondent
- *Leavenworth Advocate*; *American Citizen*, Kansas City; *Historic Times*, Lawrence; *Atchison Blade*; *Leavenworth Herald* - Topeka correspondent

Simeon O. Clayton (police officer)

- *Parsons Weekly Blade* - Editor

Tilford "Rex" Davis Jr. (teacher, city clerk - Kansas City)

- *Times-Observer*, Atchison Blade, Leavenworth Herald - Kansas City correspondent
- *Times-Observer*, Atchison Blade - Literary contributor (poetry)
- *Future State of Kansas City*, Mo. - Kansas City, Kansas, correspondent

J. Monroe Dorsey (printer, journalist)

- *Omaha (Neb.) Progress* - Assistant editor
- *Parsons Weekly Blade* - Editor

William D. Driver (printer, journalist)

- *American Citizen* - Compositor foreman
- *Indianapolis Freeman* - Compositor, correspondent at Chicago Columbian Exposition
- *Kansas Blackman*, Topeka - Publisher and editor
- *Kansas Blackman*, Coffeyville - Publisher and editor

George A. Dudley (businessman, journalist)

- *American Citizen*, Kansas City - Business manager, editor

William L. Grant (minister)

- *Historic Times*, Lawrence - Editor
- *Baptist Globe* - Field editor
- *Topeka Call* - Editor

George "Wellington" Gross (mail carrier)

- Lawrence correspondent for Leavenworth Advocate, *Historic Times*, *Times-Observer*, *American Citizen*, Atchison Blade, Leavenworth Herald
- *Historic Times*, Lawrence - City editor

Will "I. McCorker, Esq." Harris (compositor, journalist)

- Leavenworth Advocate - Typesetter, occasional contributor
- *Historic Times*, Lawrence - contributing correspondent
- *Times-Observer*, Topeka - Foreman of compositing, contributing correspondent; a partner in The Times-Observe, Pub., Co.
- *American Citizen*, Kansas City - Foreman of compositing, contributing correspondent

(Will Harris, cont'd.)

- Atchison *Blade* - Co-founder, manager, contributing correspondent
- *Future State*, Kansas City, Mo. - Managing editor, contributing correspondent
- Leavenworth *Herald* - Manager, contributing correspondent

John Homer Howlett (printer, journalist)

- Atchison *Blade* - Compositor, editor
- *Kansas Topics*, Kansas City - Publisher and editor

Mrs. Frances Jackson (teacher)

- *American Citizen*, Kansas City - Assistant editor

Fred L. Jeltz (teacher, printer)

- *Kansas State Ledger*, Topeka - Editor and publisher
- *Daily Ledger* -- Editor and publisher

William Jeltz (journalist)

- *Kansas State Ledger*, Topeka - Business manager, managing editor
- *People's Friend*, Wichita - Editor and publisher
- *People's Friend*, Topeka - 1896

Samuel W. Jones (printer, police officer)

- Wichita *Globe* - General agent, compositor, assistant editor
- *People's Friend* - Foreman of compositing
- *National Baptist World* - Publisher and editor
- *National Reflector* - Editor

Walter T. McGuinn (attorney)

- *American Citizen*, Kansas City

Mrs. Mary E. Nero (teacher)

- *American Citizen* - City solicitor, assistant editor for Kansas City, Mo., section

William W. Pope (journalist)

- Topeka *Call* - Editor

D. L. Roberson [aka D. L. Robinson] (journalist)

- *Wichita Globe* - Editor
- *Kansas Headlight*, Wichita - Assistant editor
- *Wichita Tribune* - Editor

D. D. Skinner (minister)

- *Baptist Headlight*, Topeka - Editor
- *Baptist Globe*, Parsons - Editor

N. Clark Smith (printer, musician)

- *Leavenworth Advocate* - Co-founder, editor, manager

C. H. J. Taylor (attorney)

- *American Citizen*, Kansas City - Editor

William B. Townsend (teacher, mail carrier, attorney)

- *Colored Radical*, Leavenworth
- *Colored Citizen*, Topeka
- *Leavenworth Advocate* - Editor

John L. Waller (attorney)

- *Western Recorder*, Lawrence - Editor
- *American Citizen*, Topeka - Co-founder, editor
- *Leavenworth Advocate* - Traveling agent, assistant editor
- *American Citizen*, Kansas City - Editor

E. M. Woods (journalist, attorney)

- *American Citizen*, Kansas City - Traveling agent, literary correspondent
- *Southern Argus*, Baxter Springs
- *Southern Argus*, Fort Scott
- *Eye Opener*, Parsons - Publisher and editor

W. B. Ware (co-owner of produce store)

- *Times-Observer* - Manager, editor
- *Kansas State Ledger* - City editor

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#### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Aleen J. Ratzlaff, the eldest of four siblings, grew up on a farm in south-central Kansas. She attended Tabor College in Hillsboro, where she majored in social work. After graduation, Ratzlaff moved to Wichita to work with an urban social justice organization, a job she held for more than fifteen years. She gained experience in journalism as a graduate student at Wichita State University, where she earned a master's degree in communication in 1994.

In 1993, she accepted a faculty position at her undergraduate alma mater, where she taught communication courses. After three years, she began her doctoral studies at the University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications.

While attending WSU, Ratzlaff discovered several microfilm rolls of Wichita's early black press in the library's holdings. These specialized newspapers became the subject of her master's thesis and marked the beginning of her interest in black press history. Researching the late-nineteenth-century black newspapers in Kansas merges her research interests in journalism, history, and ethnicity.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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